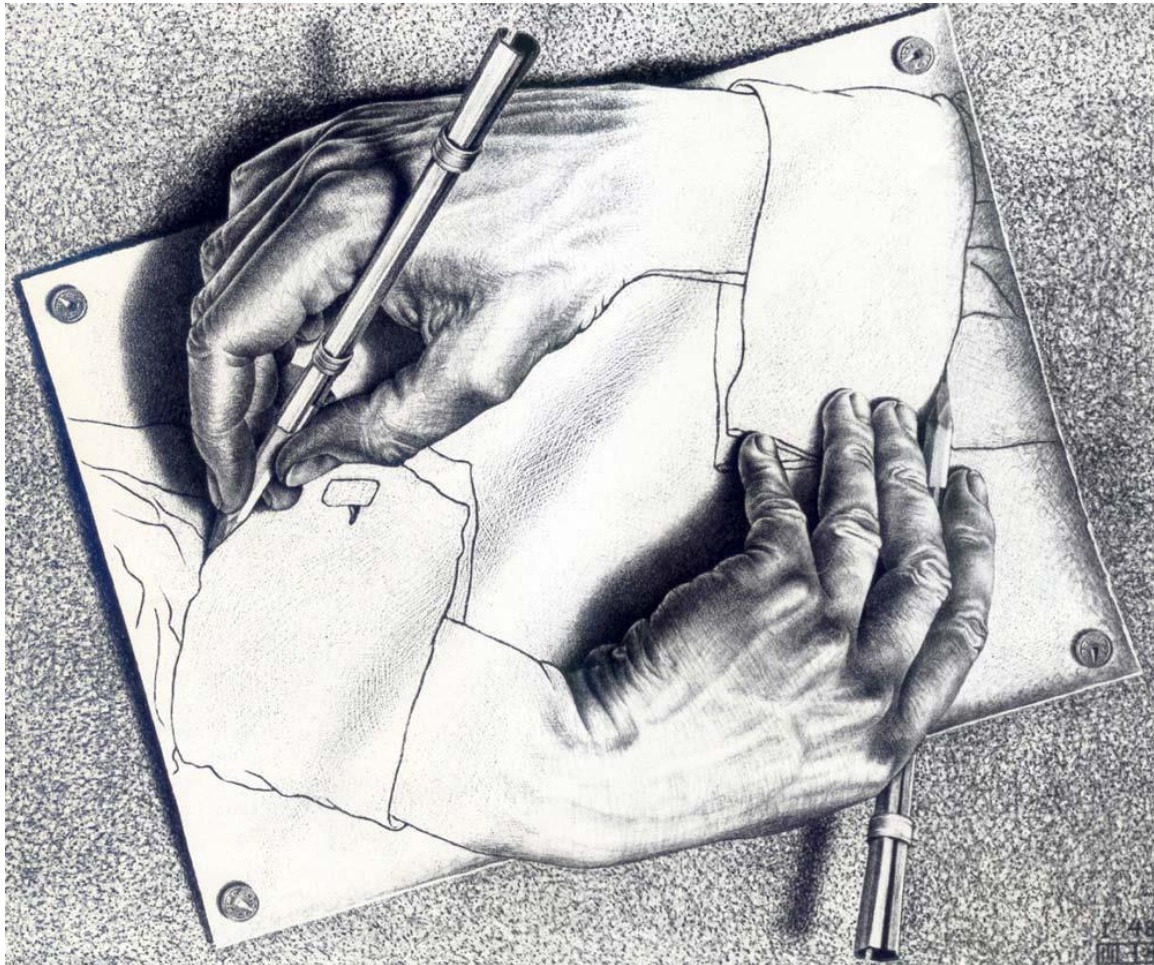


Pen & Pencil Magazine



Volume Seventeen: Spring 2025

Volume Seventeen: Pen & Pencil Magazine

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If you have a submission for the **Pen & Pencil Magazine** feel free to contact the Editor in Chief at

pbruskiewich @ gmail.com.

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Pen & Pencil Welcomes Submissions

Obelisk Press of Vancouver is pleased to publish the Seventeenth edition of *Pen & Pencil Magazine* which serves to feature the work of aspiring writers.

Pen & Pencil Magazine welcomes submissions on a quarterly basis.

The *Pen & Pencil Magazine* board is comprised of the unpaid volunteers:
Please feel free to send your short story, prose, poetry and artwork submissions to the Editor in Chief at

pbruskiewich @ gmail.com.

There is no fee to submit. There is no writer's fee provided by the journal for those who submit. The publishing rights remain with the writer.

Poetry

Yuki ... Yuki ... Yuki ... by Aki Kurosawa

Yesterday it snowed ...

Today it snowed too ...

Tomorrow it will snow again!

*Yuki ... Yuki ... Yuki ... **

This should not be
a surprise, for it is
winter here in Japan.

Yuki ... Yuki ... Yuki ...

It is supposed to be
cold and snowy, right ...
up to our knees sometimes

Yuki ... Yuki ... Yuki ...

Then here in bustling Tokyo,
It will decide to warm, and
winter knows it is time to go.

* Yuki is Japanese for snow

We are Counting Down the Days by William Webster

Oh my, are people flying around ...
here in the Big Apple. It is cold
and so are New Yorkers. It is a big rout ...
every day more bad news abounds.

North from DC the bad news creeps.
He wants to *Make America ~~Great~~ Goofy Again* ...
all he seems to do is make people weep,
with anguish and wish it was back then ...

We New Yorkers have warm hearts,
that are rich beyond words, his way ...
he was never one of us ... he lived apart.
He was a speculator and we were his play.

We are counting down the days ...
we New Yorkers truly are.
When things can go back
to the way they once were ...

Pictorial: Come and Keep Me Company



That was After All, Her World by Patrick Bruskiewich

Tenderly, I unwrapped her as I would
a box of expensive dark
chocolate. If she wanted she could
have stopped me, and pushed us apart.

But she wanted the delight of it,
the joy of pure lust between her and I,
of being completely unashamed, nothing hid
from view. I kissed her here and there ... she sighed.

No words were said, yet we understood
Through our soft touch, what brings her pleasures,
Without asking, she spread her legs wide and good,
to lay bare her splendour ... her hidden treasures.

Her hair was fiery red ... down there
Just like the long curly hair on her head
There she now lay for me, completely bare
Reclined ... immodest on her warm, soft bed

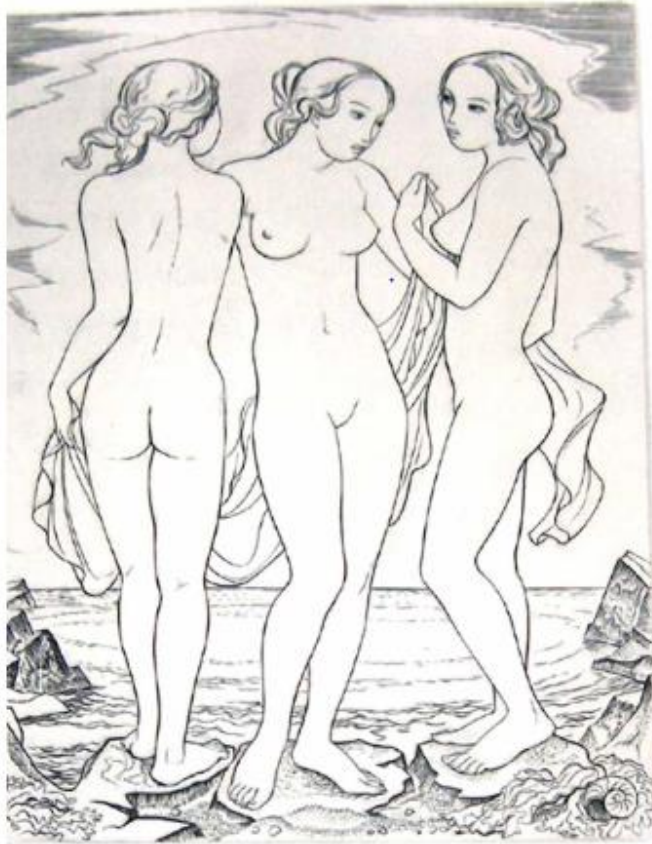
I press forward, tickling her pink, softness ... touched
with my lips and my tongue the hot flesh
that made her a girl ... In a moment she gushed
all over my chin, and exclaimed that was the best ...

Sex she had ever had with a boy ...

I smiled knowing she really loved girls

quite often. That I was her first boy ... at her tender age, a toy
is a toy, is a toy. That was after all, her world!

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What is Pink by Mary O'Neil

Pink is the color of a rose.
They come in other colors
but everyone knows
pink is the mother-color of a rose.
Pink is a new baby,
the inside of a shell ...
Pink is a cooked shrimp
and a Canterbury bell.
Pink is peachbloom,
gauzy... frail
the wind's exquisite wedding veil.
Pink is a bonbon,
pink is a blush,
some Easter bunnies
are pink plush.
If you stand in an orchard
In the middle of Spring
and you don't make a sound
you can hear pink sing,
a darling, whispery song of a thing.
Pink is the beautiful little sister
of red my teacher said,
and a ribbon girls tie
round their head.
Pink is the sash

with the lovely fold

you'll remember

when you're old.

Pink is the flower on a lady's hat

that nods and bows this way and that.

A Novella: The First Two Years of the Atelier

by Patrick Bruskiewich

The Beginning of the Atelier...

This book, the first in perhaps a series of several, is about the first two years of the *Atelier*. The *Atelier* is a small private artist's studio I host in West Vancouver. The stories in this small book are intimate ones and artistic as well. They speak of love and lust, of artistic creativity and of Eros.

Artists see the world in their own unique ways. And depending on who the artist is their world can seem cheerful or dismal. It can seem full of hope or the lack thereof. For instance, for an artist like Henri Matisse it is about color and color play. For someone like Pablo Picasso it is about sex and another type of play altogether. As an artist I live in a world balanced somewhat between Matisse and Picasso. At times I am fixated on color and other times I am fixated on the form and function of the human condition. In these stories you should see both sides of my balanced world. At least I hope you can.

In art, what we perceive is a reflection of how we perceive the world around us. As you read the stories from the *Atelier* you might realize some things about your own perception and your own artistic balance. You might even ask yourself if you are more like a Matisse, or a Picasso.

Everything has a beginning. The beginning of the *Atelier* wasn't even my idea, but it is I who now keeps it alive as artists have come and gone, and models too. As I write this, the *Atelier* is celebrating its fifteenth year, with dozens of artists who have enjoyed its purpose, and dozens of models having graced our pedestal.

The *Atelier*, which is French for ‘*Artist Studio*,’ began quite innocently when a friend picked up some second hand developing equipment for her 35 mm camera. She had a rather nice Pentax camera with a complete set of lens that she had snagged ‘second hand’ from a friend who was a drug addict and had to pawn off his camera at ‘a dime on a dollar’ to her to feed his addiction. She had been using the camera for two or three years and had started to put together a small portfolio hoping to have a showing or at least make enough money to cover the costs of her expensive pastime. She grown tired of paying an arm and a leg for poor quality prints and decided she wanted to try her hand at developing and printing her own pictures. “After all,” she asked me, “how difficult is it?”

It was a fork in her road through life. Emily could not go much further with her artistic praxis if she relied on others to develop and print her work (Emily is not her real name, but close enough). She is a creative type and enjoyed the occasional challenge. But I suspect the cost and poor quality prints she got back from the developers were not the only reason she wanted to do her own developing, for in an era before digital cameras, she had a few fetishes that could not be shared through the normal course of business. I will get to more of this in a moment.

Of course she needed a subject to photograph. I should have known that Emily had an ulterior motive when she brushed aside my suggestion of landscape pictures and still life. Emily chatted me up about her interest in

photography for about two weeks before she finally found the courage to turn to me one day and said “I want to try my hand at portraits.”

Well I am a great fan of Yousuf Karsh and his body of portraits and so I took my copy of Karsh’s *Portraits of Greatness* off my art bookshelf and invited Emily to stop by for coffee after work on a Wednesday evening. This was the first time we would meet one on one. Being somewhat naïve, I wasn’t looking for anything much from our coffee except a good chat about photography and artistic praxis.

Emily hardly glanced at the Karsh pictures as she sipped her coffee and flipped through Karsh’s portraits of Queen Elizabeth, Winston Churchill, Pablo Picasso and Earnest Hemingway.

She had brought her camera and was holding it, fiddling with some of the camera settings. There was an awkward silence and then she looked up at me. “Umm ... well ... it’s a *special kind* of portrait I am interested in.”

There was a strain to her smile that told me that it was something very ... very ... special kind she wanted to take. So I smiled back and said “what special kind?”

She looked away from me and continued. “I have always wanted to do bodyscape photography.”

“Bodyscape?” I had never heard the word before and asked her to explain.

“Bodyscape photography is a form of figurative photography.”

“*Figuratives?*” I queried, just to make sure I understood what she meant.

She paused and I nodded to invite her to continue. “nudes ...”

I stayed silent.

“She quickly continued “... but instead of photographing the entire body, you focus on specific parts of the body.” As I looked at her, Emily’s excitement started show as she began to poke up from beneath her shirt.

“Parts?” I asked. The way she said the word I had no doubt what she meant. But I thought I might play along with her and see what happened. I don’t think she was wearing a brassiere. And besides, what is wrong with a bit of flirting? I had never even considered taking a figurative photograph of another person, let alone considered letting someone take such intimate pictures of me.

She suddenly felt self-conscious and stood up nervously and walked over to my bookshelf, quickly searching for a book that might help her with her sell. She saw something that caught her eye across a shelf and leaned over and grabbed a book of Manray photographs and turned half way towards me flipped through it hungrily. As she leaned over I could see clear into her shirt. It confirmed what I already knew, Emily wasn’t wearing a brassiere.

In the book she seemed to find what she was looking for and looked over at me with hungry eyes. There was an awkward pause as she stood there. Neither of us knew what to say next. In looking up at her I kept my face neutral and thought ... let's see where this goes.

Maybe to help you see the full picture, I should tell you more about Emily. She was a good decade younger than I was at the time, middling in height, a tad over weight, dressed in run down jeans, and a lumber jack shirt and sneakers. She did not wear anything underneath her clothes (you just intuitively knew this). She had bleach blonde hair (I would later find out that she was really a brunette ... after all photography is a shared artistic praxis) and gray-pale blue eyes. She wore no make-up or jewelry. You had the sense she had a pragmatic notion that she was not beautiful so why try. The only fault in her character was that she smoked like a locomotive.

As I looked at her that afternoon I thought if they were bodyscape photos without a face what harm could that be? I would find her fetishes more than made up for her pragmatism.

Emily perhaps sensed my thought for she walked over and stood over me as she showed me a picture of Lee Miller taken by ManRay from the 1930's. It was the famous picture of Lee Millers torso with diagonal shadows of dark and light. I looked up at her and asked "are you a fan of Manray?"

She replied “I like some of his work, especially his bodyscapes ...” As I looked up at her I sensed that she would be artistic and perhaps a bit edgy, but not too much of a bother beyond that. She would just enjoy the art and not expect more. So I played on ...

“If I were to let you photograph me as a bodyscape ... what part would you begin with. This was sort of Queen’s gambit. If she asked for too much I would say no. If she asked for too little the game would continue but at a slower pace.

I upped the ante. “Perhaps to make it fun, I get to photograph the same sort of bodyscape with you as the model?” The game was now a seduction between the sexes.

There was a long moment of hesitation as Emily pondered her next move in this novel game she was playing with me. She looked up at me to try to gauge my face but I kept it neutral. Her irises were as big as nickels.

She looked around the room, then at me, then down at my feet. Then Emily made her decision. “I would like to begin with your feet.”

I smiled warmly. “Sure ... why not.” Emily had chosen wisely.

Thoughtfully, Emily closed the Manray book and walked over to the bookshelf and carefully put the book back in its rightful place. When she was

standing beside me again I looked up at her and she said “now is as best a time as ever to get started.

I parried. “Let us sit and talk about your idea.” She hadn’t expected me to ask her about her idea and so she stood there dumbfounded not knowing what to say. She just wanted to point and shoot ... After all that was the Pentax motto. It was evident that we were expecting different things from our encounter.

So I continued on. “I understand a good photographer like Yousuf Karsh thinks of the purpose of his artwork before hand and then composes it in the camera. He also takes only ONE picture at each sitting.”

Her face went pained when I emphasized the word ONE.

She may not have expected ‘*one picture at each sitting*’ but by asking her to think about what she was going to do, this forced Emily to think of the artistry of her work. I was doing a Brassai on her (Brassai was a very poor Parisian photographer from the 1930’s who did one or two photographs a week ... but of great artistry). Sure in our day and age film is cheap ... but she had after all complained to me that developing the negative and the prints was too costly and that was why she had bought herself the second hand developing equipment so that she could do that herself.

I had upped the ante and she parried up. “I want to take a picture of both our feet.” It was her way of accepting my terms, on a sort of equal basis, artist

and model. I slowly nodded acceptance of the idea. I should not have agreed so readily.

“So how do you want to do this?” I asked Emily.

“On the couch ... you on your stomach.” It was then when she realized how excited she was and crossed her arms. My flirting had flourished her.

I shrugged my shoulders and stood and walked over to the couch and lay down on my stomach, propping myself up on my elbows. She moved a chair next to the couch and sat down and then focused the camera on my feet.

There was another awkward silence. I looked over my shoulder at her and she smiled at me. “Could I ask you to do something?”

“What?” I sort of whispered back at her.

“Can you take your pants off?”

I was perplexed. It was a simple thing to take off my socks, and roll up my pants. Then she could take a simple photograph of our feet ... but she obviously had something else planned.

“What’s wrong with how things are now?” I asked her.

“It ruins the camera angle and the composition. I can see the edge of your pants at the edge of the photo.”

“Can’t you just trim the picture?”

“Not if I am composing in thirds ... or with the Golden ratio.” I smiled. She had Brassiaed me in return! I stood and took off my pants, threw them on the back of a chair and then plunked myself back down on the sofa. Then I felt her hand tug at my underwear ... and I did nothing to stop her as her removed them as well. I slipped out of my shirt and just lay there, an artist’s model *sans habillement*.

I heard Emily sigh. I could hear her adjust the camera settings on her Pentax. Then I felt her warm foot against my right foot, and a single click of her camera and voila, her first composition was set. This was the beginning of the Atelier.



My Feet and Her's

Tit for Tat

The first time we did art together, Emily and I, she was most insistent that since she was there and I was sitting for her that she wanted to do many more bodyscape pics than just the single snap of our feet. But I stuck to my guns and insisted that if I am to be her model that each sitting would be composed and reflect a preconceived creative theme.

“If it is art you want to create ... then create your photographs like art. Don’t just do the Play Girl thing ... I am not just going to be your boy toy.” She smirked when I said this. Was she smirking because I had read her thoughts or was it scorn on her part? She was annoyed but I wanted her to understand that I would not sit for her if all she wanted was an orgy of photographs of a naked man. She could go someplace else and find someone else if that was what she wanted.

Emily started to pout. I rolled onto my side, covering my masculinity with my hand and did a Burt Reynold. She began to lift her camera to her eye and I shook my head. With a finger on my modesty hand I wagged it back and forth and said “no you don’t”

Reluctantly she lowered her camera and licked her lips. I smiled as she did this. “I want this to be about art and not about sex ...”

She frowned and so to drive home the point I suggested that to be fair in our artistic endeavor that she would have to sit for me as well. While she knew

that I enjoyed drawing and painting, her body language told me that Emily did not like the equality idea one bit!

I closed my legs over my masculinity, hiding myself, then moved my away my hand and watched her hungry eyes follow me as I did this. I smirked at her and her pout became more pronounced. Life is a busy, two way street ... and I could be stubborn too!

Understand me, I asked she sit for me for two very good reasons. One was to allow me to have a model to do some art, and the other was to quell her lustful impulse and appetite. Sure, I was intrigued by her hidden fetishes. Who wouldn't be but by taking turns being the model this would mean our sessions together would become more than just moments of clothed female and naked male. It would temper her fetishes and make our interaction a sort of dialogue and not a monologue.

Emily was very unhappy about this. “”It seems like a total waste of my time ... for me to come to just take one picture.” She wagged her camera back and forth through the air as she uttered this.

I countered, “and the model ... what do you think your artist's model thinks? It takes a bit of courage to lay here *sans habillement* and let you take some snaps.” She smiled and came to sit on the couch next to my. Emily studied my body. I gave her a moment to enjoy the view then a turned over, bounded up off the bed, covering myself with a hand and then grabbed my clothes and dashed into the bathroom to change.

When I re-entered the room she was gone. Emily had scribbled a single word on a scrap of paper ...Thanks!! Her message was somewhat ambiguous. Was she happy how things had turned out or was it a 'thanks' but no thanks kind of message?

I knew she was keen to do her bodyscape project but asking her to sit for me the next session meant that it was a good two weeks before she phoned me to ask ... 'when ... and what shall we do at this session?'

I suggested another Wednesday night, like last time. Then I reminded her she would be sitting for me while I took a single snap of her.

There was a pause and then her voice dropped to almost a whisper. "What do you have in *mind*?" she asked me with an edge to the word *mind*.

I paused a moment for effect ... or maybe to flirt with her ... to make her think I was gathering my courage and then responded in a whisper as well "I haven't given it much thought," but in fact I had. I wasn't going to tell her just then and there. Instead I decided to flirt with her a bit. "Where a nice dress ... nothing too tight fitting."

"Huh? Why ..."

"Tight fitting clothes leave marks on the model's body and they have to sit around naked for a while to wait for the marks to disappear."

“Oh. I could bring a robe.”

“You could, but no tight fitting means, no brassiere and ...”

“No panties ...” she finished the sentence. She didn’t know that I already knew she did not encumber herself with underwear.

I held the receiver in my hand wondering whether the flirting had worked. I could hear sigh at the other end of the line.

“Sure, see you Wednesday. I will wear a nice dress,” then a click as the line went dead. My immediate reaction was she would not show up.

On Wednesday a few minutes before 7 in the evening Emily arrived a bit early which was a good sign and brought with her a nice bottle of red wine. Another good sign! As it happened I had some salmon pate and crackers kicking about and so our second artistic session started with a sort of celebration.

She brought the first print, the three feet photograph and we studied it together. I thought that it was a wonderful photograph. Two male feet with the man obviously naked and obviously lying face down on the couch, and one female foot, with nail polish and all, expressing a certain angst that the viewer had to decide. Was she waking him up? Was she boasting of her conquest of him?

I told her it was well composed and that her three feet photograph was a nice piece of art. I asked her what a woman might think of the print. She looked at the print for a moment. Then she suddenly laughed. “I think the foot is poking the man ... waking him up.”

“Really ... and?” I wanted her to elaborate.

“And, what do you mean and?” Her forehead wrinkled in consternation.

“And? Do I have to spell it out?” She nodded. “Well ... a pessimistic mind would say he has been sleeping and needed to be woken up. An optimistic mind would say that they just made love and she had exhausted him!”

She laughed. And I joined her in her laughter, setting the print down on the coffee table. “When you compose a photograph ... you can try to compose not just the visual but the psychological.”

“The psychological?” Emily looked at me with a thoughtful expression.

“Yes, the psychological. You may not realize it but the biggest sex organ we have in our bodies is in fact our brains. Tickle the brain’s fancy ... and you tickle the body’s fancy.”

I went silent hoping she would say something but she just stood there, quietly. I think it just dawned on her what we would be doing this evening. Emily was nervous, for this time around she knew I would be the artist and she the model.

She looked around the room. “Where’s your camera?” she asked?

“I thought we would use your camera ... that way you can keep the negatives and develop the prints.”

Her face lit up with a warm smile, for she immediately understood this gesture. I did not want her to feel uncomfortable if she sits for some figurative pictures for me. When she sat for me, she would keep all the pictures I took of her, and of course she took of me. I was, after all, only interested in art.

I opened the bottle of wine and I set the pate and crackers on the table. She sat knees together at the edge of the couch with her arms straight by her side as if her arms were holding her up. Her dress was a simple patterned frock with a bit of a dip in the collar. The way she was sitting allowed a bit of a peek and yes she was not wearing anything tight fitting on top.

Emily was too nervous to settle back and relax on the couch. I poured her a large glass of wine and handed it to her. As she took the glass the wine sloshed out of the glass and on her hand. She giggled nervously.

“Sorry,” I said to her as Emily licked the wine off her hand. The little taste of wine wet her appetite, and led to her to her bigger tasting, as she nearly emptied her glass in one huge gulp. I had barely enough time to pour some wine into my glass before she pressed her glass to me and had me refill for her. This time I put more wine in her glass and she set it down carefully on

the table. As Emily reached for a cracker and started to put pate on it I noticed her hands were shaking.

“Nervous?” I asked her.

She brought her cracker to her mouth and nodded before taking a bite. Crumbs fell down the front of her dress. She set the half bitten cracker down and stood up sweeping the crackers off her dress and onto the carpet floor. When she realized the crumbs were making a mess at her feet it was then that I noticed that she had fresh lavender nail polish on her toe nails. They were no longer painted in pink. She sat down and noticed I was staring at her toes.

“What?” she queried.

“Weren’t your toe nails pink the last time?”

“You noticed this?” She was surprised.

I nodded.

“What else do you notice?” She leaned forward provocatively.

“That you are very nervous ... please don’t be. ”

“How can I not be nervous ... you will take my picture ...”

“So I will ...” I smiled as I said this, cocking my head to one side with attitude.

“I suppose you want me to take my dress off?”

“First, let’s talk about the picture I want to take of you.” I thought it would be fun to tickle her brain a bit.

“Yes let’s.” She leaned back on the couch, crossing her legs as she did this. A waft of warm fragrant air billowed in my face. It was not the fragrance of store bought perfume, but that of her own awakening. There is a marvelous aroma that an aroused woman shares from their *source de vie* when they are ecstatic. Obviously Emily was very happy!

I sat down on a chair at the end of the couch. I took up my wine glass and offered to toast her. She took up her glass and we clicked them together. “A votre santé.”

“Merci,” she responded cheerfully.

I took a sip of my wine and studied her face as she took a sip from her wine glass. She upended the glass and emptied her second glass of wine.

I took another sip and then slowly set my wine glass down on the table. I poured her a third glass, leaving just a trickle left in the bottle. Once she had finished her third glass she would be in a state of pure bliss. I set the bottle down and prepared a cracker, moving slowly and deliberately as I did this.

Out of the corner of my eye I could see that her face was getting redder and redder as I took my time. Leisurely I sat back, took a bite from my cracker, and then set it down on my plate half-eaten. I brushed the crumbs off me.

“I was thinking ...” I said and stopped, without looking up at her.

“Yes ...” she responded eagerly.

Time to tease her some more. “How’s the pate? Do you like it?”

She looked down at her cracker surprised. “I guess so.” She quickly looked back up at me.

“The wine you brought is rather nice. Where did you get it?” I knew that at this juncture the last thing she wanted was a handful of inane questions about the wine.

There was an air of frustration in her voice as she answered this question. “It was a gift left over from Christmas.”

“From who? I smiled.

“I can’t remember,” she responded abruptly. She waved her hand, “a friend.”

Well, here was an opportunity I could not miss! “A boy friend?”

She shook her head.

“Do you have a boy friend?” I queried.

She shook her head with a frown. Her frown was a sort of ‘get on with it’ frown.

Slowly I took up my glass, swishing the wine around in it. I looked down into my glass as I continued. “I was thinking ...”

“Yes ...” she leaned forward.

“to take a single picture ...”

“As we agreed,” she hurriedly pressed the point.

“Yes ... as we agreed ...” I smiled as she moved herself closer to the edge of the couch. As she did this her dress rode up her thigh.

“I was thinking ...” She moved closer to the edge and her dress rode up a bit more. Another few centimeters and I would know the answer to the meaning of a man’s life ...”to take a picture of you ...”

Oh it was exquisite, the tease we were both giving each other. I wonder if she knew the effect she was having on me, I thought. How could she not?

“I was thinking I want to take a photograph of you lying on your back and me above you with your camera looking down at you.” I used my hands to emphasize the narration, “... with your hair on a pillow billowing out like the rays of the sun.”

You could sense the tension melt from within her. She had perhaps expected worst like a full frontal or the *full-Monty*. But I am interested in art, not pornography. Still, as we sat opposite each other, I wondered about her ... what she looked like without her dress on, her breasts ... her hips ... the mystique of her. It was then that I wondered whether she took a razor to her intimate and sensitive place, her *source de vie*. In a moment I would find out.

Emily stood and handed me her camera acquiescing to my idea.

I looked up at her as she looked down at me.

“And you want me to take my dress off?”

I shrugged my shoulders. “It is entirely your choice.”

“And where are we going to take this picture? On your bed?”

I shook my head. “I thought I might push the coffee table out of the way and we could lay a white blanket on the floor and you could lie on the blanket.”

As she heard me say this I sensed her curiosity build. “Excuse me ... may I use your bathroom for a second?” I waved her along with my hand and as she disappeared into my bathroom I started to move the coffee table out of the way and went to get a blanket from my closet.

I had my back to her when she returned. I heard the door to the bathroom open and then a few foot-steps and then silence. Out of the corner of my eye I saw her set her folded dress on the couch. I slowly stood and turned. There she was standing behind me with one hand across her bare breasts and her second hand hiding away her *source de vie*.

“I decided ... fair was fair ...” I looked into her eyes and smiled. I thought it best to help her feel relaxed.

“Here ... I will turn my back as you make yourself comfortable and when you are ready I will turn and compose the shot.”

I stepped aside and turned my back. As she walked past me I could feel the heat of her body and smell her remarkable aroma. Indeed she was very happy.

I heard her set herself down upon the blanket and after a short pause she said “you can turn around now.”

I slowly turned, stepped over her and brought her camera to my eye. I had already set the focal length and f/stop and a long shutter speed.

Emily has set her hair in a ray like halo. I straightened out one or two bundles of her hair. Her cheeks were flush with anticipation and her smile that of a very happy person. Framed by the eyepiece of the camera all I could see was her face and the top of her torso from the collar bone upwards. I was nervous and wondered whether I should take the camera from my eye. But through the eyepiece I could see her beaming. It was a perfect moment and so I snapped the picture

I waited a second or two before I let the camera down from my eye. Then I stepped off from above her and turned slowly around. I had caught a brief glimpse of her but only enough to say it was between a glimmer and a glance. Her breasts were modest for her height, and her nipples a healthy pink and erect. While she was a bit pudgy, her hips were a gracious curve and Emily did not shave between her legs. I could tell her skin was soft, and there was not a blemish on her body. She was a brunette not a blonde.

“That’s it?” she asked with an air of disappointment.

“That’s it!” I said in response. “You can get dressed now.”

I could hear her get to her feet and once again felt her heat as she stepped past me. Then out of the corner of my eye I saw her face glanced at me from around my shoulder.

“I think I now understand you,” she said putting a hand on my arm. “This is about art isn’t it?”

I smiled and nodded at her. That gave her the confidence to walk past me. Emily wanted me to have more than glimmer of her and more than a mere glance

When she got to the bathroom door she turned to face me and hugged the door frame with her leg. I fought the urge to bring the camera up to my eye and take a second picture. This was evidently Emily's way to test whether I practiced what I preached.

"You are a tease ..." I said.

Emily nodded as she brought a hand up to her breast. "Tit for tat," is all she said as she smiled and closed the bathroom door behind her.

I let out a giant sigh and thought, next time I won't rush to take the photograph so fast!

The Coin Toss

I wish I could say I had the marvelous picture I took of Emily to share with you but I think I have put it in such a safe place ... I cannot remember where I put it! She gave me a small almost postage size copy of her picture which I put into a small pewter frame and then ... well ... I haven't seen it for years. It is probably at the bottom of a box of artistic knickknack. As the Atelier has grown and evolved into a place for photography, drawing, painting and sculpture, more and more artistic things have been collected, and yes, more and more knick knacks too.

The walls are now covered with art, some commercial and some produced by the artists who have frequented the Atelier. It has been six or seven years since we have run out of space on our walls and it is come to swap out old art for new, or commercial art for art signed by an artist. There are a few paintings that are even stacked up against the wall, waiting for space to be freed so they could be hung.

As I did photographic art with Emily there was something I noticed and you would perhaps understand. It is that as we worked together on our photographic project whenever it was her turn to take a picture of me she was keen and eager, always finding the time immediately to press on with her work ... but when it was my turn to take a picture of her, weeks would sometimes pass before she would 'find the time to do art.' She said it was she was busy doing other things ... but I sensed this was not really the case.

I smile as I write this, for this sort of was a clear reflection of Emily's angst. It is understandable for a man to be less timid than a woman when it comes to their body, irrespective of whether he is graciously endowed, or not. On the other hand, it has been my experience that woman tend to be more critical of their bodies, perhaps worried about whether they are too portly, or sag here or there or ... god forbid ... might have a wrinkle or two.

I think it might even have been Emily who told me that '*as a man ages they are thought to age like wine into brandy, while a women aged from wine into wine vinegar.*' I did not fully understand the double entendre when she shared it with me. Perhaps one day a woman will explain the double entendre. Does it have something to do with that what flows from their *source de vie*? As a woman ages ... is that was she was intimating in Emily's wine to wine vinegar comment?

Emily was not a Botticelli Venus, nor was she a Medusa either! She was very much a product of her troubled and turbulent upbringing and a pragmatism that grew out of the fact she could never slip away from the shadow of her older sister, who was a prima donna, in so many ways.

Her older sister, let us call her, Isabella (not her real name) had an intense self-preoccupation that everyone around her found problematic, even her sister. They were only two years apart in chronological age, but Isabella was a good decade or two older in her precepts, compared to her younger sister. They both came from a broken family, with a drunkard, and slick operator of a father and with a hard working single mom who was a high school English

teacher. Both Isabella and Emily had scars across their heart and well, while the older could blow like a tornado, the younger preferred to not blow up a storm when she was put out by something. It was the difference between fight and flight. And what a contrast!

One evening a complete stranger banged on the door of the Atelier. She did not introduce herself when I opened the door but instead pushed passed me and then sat herself down. I had an inkling who this interloper might be by the off handed comment that Emily made over the phone that afternoon that her older sister had come across the pictures we had taken of each other. Yes, you guessed it, the interloper was Isabella!

“Well ... who are you?” I asked her, more to confirm my suspicion than to inquire.

“I am Emily’s older sister!” She sat there sternly glaring at me.

“And your name is?” I asked her this more to annoy her than anything else. Hell, if she was push my buttons I should push her’s as well. It seemed only fair.

“Isabella!” The letters seared off her tongue. “Didn’t Emily tell you about me?”

I shook my head and frowned. We are allowed a few white lies from time to time in life aren’t we? “I see ... and what brings you here?” I smiled.

“I want to see what kind of a guy you are!” Her eyes glared at me.

“How’s your sister today?” I sat down opposite her and leaned back in my chair. “Does she know you are coming to beat me up?”

“Beat you up?” she said scornfully.

“You just pushed passed me and made yourself at home.” I pointed to her shoes. “Hell, you haven’t even taken off your shoes!”

She kicked off her shoes and I leaned forward to take them and put them at the door. She picked them up off the floor and handed them to me. I could see they were expensive light blue Italian made shoes. Isabella was in fact dressed in a designer outfit, a light blue blouse and skirt and matching light blue colored stockings. She had a small hand bag with gold chain over her right shoulder. Unlike her sister who did not wear jewelry, Isabella was wearing pearl earrings and a pearl necklace. Her hair was blonde, probably dyed, and in a shoulder length Jennifer Aniston hair doo.

“Would you like some tea?” I asked, wondering how long she might have come to roost.

“I won’t be visiting long.” I went and set her shoes down near the door.

“I will make some tea for myself then.” I wanted to go to the kitchen to give her a chance to settle down. Isabella struck me as a frustrated, perhaps wound up type, probably a perfectionist, and a bit obsessive. I wondered if she had sexual fetishes like her sister.

As I walked to the kitchen I heard Isabella stir from her chair. Out of the corner of my eye I watched as she walked around the Atelier looking at the art on the wall. Some of that art was commercial, and some of the art was either by me or by some of my artist friends. She stopped in front of a pair of figurative ... Adam and Eve. She seemed most interested in Adam ... I smiled. I had been Adam that session. I wondered if she would make the connection.

In the kitchen I filled the kettle with tap water, turned the element on and set the kettle down, then grabbed the tea pot and put a green tea bag into it. I quietly returned to the main room of the Atelier. Isabella had her back to me and did not know I was watching her. From behind I could see she had a different body shape than that of her sister. Unlike Emily who was shaped like a cello, Isabella was shaped more like a pear.

Just as I arrived at my chair to sit Isabella suddenly turned around. In profile I could see that she had less up-top and more down below than her sister. I imagined how Isabella might be envious of her younger sister.

I sat down. “So ... Isabella, what’s on your mind?”

She trod back to her chair and all but stumbled into it. Despite her fashionable attire Isabella seemed to have fewer social graces than her younger sister. Maybe it was because she had a forceful personality.

“So what are you *doing* with my sister?” She crossed her arms as she said the word *doing*. Her body language spoke louder than her words.

“Art ...” I leaned back and stretched my left leg as I said this, putting my left thumb in my belt.

“Art!” She said the word with real indignation.

“Yes ... art ... It was your sister who asked me to sit for photographs and not the other way around!”

Isabella seemed to be honestly surprised when I said this.

“You probably think it is always *un homme qui cherche les femmes*.”

“huh?”

“That it is the man who chases after women ... but sometimes it is the woman who chases after the man.”

She went silent and the expression on her face softened, but just a small amount.

“Emily wanted to take a whole roll of pictures of me naked ...” Her face went red when I said the n-word. I continued on. “But I said I would sit for her only if she composed one good picture each sitting, and no more than one good picture.”

“So it is art!” As she said this she once again looked around the room.

I nodded. “Do you do art?” I asked her.

She leaned forward in her chair and smiled. “Sometimes.”

“What kind of art do you do?” I could tell her hostility was slowly melting.

She looked away to the right and said “I like to draw.” I smiled to myself. That look to the right was a *tell*, that she was making up what she was saying.

“What do you like to draw?” I just as well can play her game.

“People ...” She crooked her head to one side as she said people.

“Portraits?” I was curious to know what she meant by people. “Figuratives?”

“Figuratives?”

“Life drawing ... where the model is draped, semi-draped or perhaps not wearing anything at all. Naked.”

“Yes ... figuratives too ...”

“Why don’t you come the next time your sister comes to take a photograph of me and you can do some figurative drawing.” I asked this of Isabella because I was curious to see Isabella and Emily together at the same place doing the same thing. But deep down I sensed it would be like mixing vinegar and oil.

Immediately Isabella shook her head. “That wouldn’t work.”

“Why wouldn’t it?” I was curious to know why, in her own words..

“I don’t want to get in Emily’s way.” When she said this I leaned back into my chair and conveyed my disbelief by way of my body language. This seemed an odd thing for Isabella to say given that she was intruding clearly intruding in her sister’s photographic art project without even perhaps telling Emily that she was going to stop by and read me the riot act.

“Does she know you are her?” I asked. Nervously she looked away. Isabella’s silence was the answer.

After perhaps fifteen seconds Isabella broke her silence. “You’ll not tell her I came for a visit ... will you?” She lowered her voice as she said the last two

words. I swear Isabella was pleading with me. There was something else going on here that intrigued me.

“I am a bit confused. If you don’t want to come do art with your sister, why are you here?” I asked this question very carefully. I was forceful enough to beg an answer without being insistent.

“Well ...” she straightened the hem of her skirt, then looked up at me. “I was curious what the Atelier was about.” She waved a hand to the art on the wall.

“And so, what do you think it is about?” I pressed forward with my question.

Isabella looked at the art on the wall and the artist’s easel, before she replied “It *is* about art.” She emphasized the word *is*.

“Since you are here ...” I thought, what the hell. “Would you like to do some art?”

“Can we?” For the first time since she barged in her eyes sparkled.

I knew what she wanted even before she asked, but I did not want to let her barge in and get what she really wanted. I looked around the Atelier for a way out of this quandary. Then I saw a coin on the floor and picked it up. “Heads or tails?”

“What?”

I balanced the coin in my thumb and got ready to toss it. “Heads or tails?”

Isabelle suddenly got defensive. “What are you getting at?”

“You know here in the Atelier we take turns sitting for art. I will flip the coin and we shall see who will sit and who will draw. Winner draws. The other person will sit as the artist model” I flipped the coin and caught it on the back of my hand and covered the coin with my other hand. “Well?”

“Heads,” she said but without enthusiasm.

I uncovered the coin. It was tails. I showed the coin to her “I guess I draw.”

“Do I have to take my clothes off?” She asked harshly. From the front of her blouse I could discern her arousal. Her words said one thing, but her body was saying another thing.

I flipped the coin a second time and waited for her prediction. “Tails.” She said this time with more enthusiasm. She was getting into the spirit of our game.

It was heads! “I guess so ... but you can keep your panties on if you are two shy.””

Isabella was now visibly nervous. She had been beaten at her own game. . She glanced at her watch. “Look at the time. I have to go.” She started up out of her chair.

I smiled. I didn’t think she would play the game by the rules, but at least I had pushed her buttons.

Isabella stood, and straightened out her dress and started to the door.

“Since you are such a good sport ... next time you come we will do the coin toss all over again.” She smiled. That promise set her mind to rest.

As she passed me she stopped and looked straight into my eyes. “Listen ... If you promise not to tell Emily I stopped by ...I might come back sometime and we’ll ...”

“Do art?” I finished the sentence. Isabella nodded. “Sure ... the Atelier is here for artists to do art,” I asserted.

“If I sit for you ... will you really sit for me?” She asked.

I nodded and handed her my email address written on a piece of paper. She folded it and carefully put the small slip of paper in her purse.

I watched Isabella as she carefully put on her shoes. Her skirt was a bit short and the cut of her blouse a bit bold. I smiled when I realized she was pale blue through and through. Then she left.

From the door of the Atelier I watched as Isabella walked out to her car. She paused just before getting into her dark blue Volkswagen and waived back when she saw me standing there watching her. I waved back.. That was a good sign. It was two weeks before Isabella would be back at the Atelier to ‘do art.’

Peter ... Peter ... Pumpkin Eater!

A few days, after her sister had burst into the Atelier uninvited, Emily was once again wanting to come do a photographic session. Emily was going to come by this evening after work.

When Emily phoned I listened carefully to her words and her intonation so as to gather any hint whether she knew Isabella was on the troll. The word troll may seem a bit harsh but how else could I explain what her big sister was up to. I imagine big sis' had her motives, but at that venture I could only speculate what those motives were. Towards the end of our short telephone conversation I decided to go fishing on my own.

“How’s your big sis’?” I asked Emily.

“Oh ... why do you ask?” Emily was surprised I did.

“You had mentioned her.” I paused but there was silence. “Does she like art?”

“Yes, she likes to paint and draw, but ...” Again silence.

“But what?” I pushed on but just with a small momentum.

“Well ... to be honest ... we don’t really get along very well.” There was a long sigh over the telephone.

“I have an older brother and two younger sisters. We are all different. And ... we rarely get along. It’s a bit of a circus.” I said this as a distraction to keep our conversation going. But I intended to steer back to Emily and her sister.

“A bit of a circus?” Emily’s voice was flat and neutral. I smiled to myself.

“Yes ... first my brother came along and then less than a year later I came into the world and a year and a bit later the first girl in the family. When my mother was expecting me the grandparents were hoping for a girl and well ... when I was born with the wrong appendage ...”

“Appendage?” She blurted the word out before really thinking about the meaning.

“You know ... a wiggle instead of a purse ...”

Emily giggled. “Oh ... I have never heard it described just that way.”

“The wiggle?” I was flirting with her.

“The purse ...”

“.. a place where precious treasures are hidden away ... for safe keeping.”

“Most boys would call it something else.” There was now animation in her voice.

“Like what?” I was intrigued and wanted to know.

“A snatch ... a lock ... you know.”

“Why a snatch?” I asked.

“Isn’t it obvious?” She giggled.

“Not really.” I thought to cajole her and see where that took us.

“When you put it in a girl ... you’re ... you know ... is snatched away.” Emily was enjoying herself.

“You mean you girls grab it and don’t want to give it back?”

“Well ... it depends.” Now she was flirting with me. So much for art!

“What does it depend on?” I asked as if a profound secret of the world of girls was about to be shared with me.

“It depends on whether he was a good lover or not!” She giggled.

Wouldn't sex be different if a boy could only use his penis once ...” When I said the p-word I heard a sudden breath of air. “... and it was snatched away from him? And what would most girls call a man's privates?”

“His peter ...”

“As in Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater?” In a sort of free word association I just said the first thing that came to mind. Emily was giggling over the phone.

I heard a voice in the background and recognized it as her sister Isabella. ‘Who are you talking to?’

“Listen ... I have to go ...” Emily was suddenly frantic.

“Is that your sister?”

“Yes ...” In the background I heard the same questions ‘Who are you talking to?’ Then a muffle as Emily covered the phone with her hand. I could just barely make out the words “Can't you see I am on the phone.”

‘Is that your artist friend?’ And then Emily saying ‘its none of your business.’ Then the phone went dead.

Wow! There was a bit of animosity between the two sisters.

I set out some things for coffee and a plate of hors d'oeuvres for around 7 that evening but to be honest I did not expect Emily to turn up. Seven was the time she usually stopped by.

When it was the top of the hour I sat there watching the clock tick. There is a thing in psychology that when you waited for something your internal clock seemed to slow time down. As I watched the second hand sweep the face of the clock it seemed that the hand took longer and longer to go once around the clock face until around five minutes at the hour, the second hand was dragging.

As I waited I also started to notice all the little sounds from around the Atelier that I took for granted. You could hear the sounds of cars speeding by on the highway that ran past just a few block down from where the Atelier stood. I could hear footsteps from the fourth floor as someone walked down the corridor in the front of the building. The pipe rattled as someone turned the water on and off down below. I even could hear the twitter of birds frolicking outside and my own breath.

I was deep in these sounds when a rap at the door cause me to jump from my chair.

I opened the door not knowing what to expect. There was Emily all by herself.

“Sorry I am late. My sister wanted to come too ... but I said no! We had a big argument!”

Emily looked tired. Must have been quite an argument I thought.

“I don’t think I will stay very long today.” She had a frown on her face.

“Just time for a quick pic?”

“I am not in the mood anymore to do art ...” Emily said this with some conviction.

I decided it would be my challenge for the evening to change her mindset, and cheer her up. “Come in.” I almost sang the words and motioned her to enter with my hand. She kicked off her shoes and walked past me into the Atelier.

“Make yourself comfortable and let me make us some coffee.” I watched her set her camera on the table and fall into a chair. Emily had the air of a defeated person.

As I put the kettle on I said loudly “I have been thinking about what you said over the phone.”

“What I said?” she answered.

“Yes ... you know ... about snatching and things.”

“Oh.” She was not expecting me to remind her of this. But ‘oh’ is all she said. I was going to walk on eggshells for a few minutes.

I returned into the Atelier and sat down. “The coffee will be ready in a few minutes.” Emily looked at me wearily. “Whose turn is it to sit?” I asked. I was not one to give up my challenges so readily.

“Your’s.” I stood and she looked at me with a blank stare. I started to unbutton my shirt.

“What are you doing?” she queried.

“It is my turn to sit so I am taking my clothes off.” A bit of color returned to her cheeks as I opened my shirt and undid the buttons on my wrists.

Unconsciously she glanced at the washroom door. “Do you want me to get ready somewhere else?”

She smiled and shook her head from side to side.

A devilish thought came to mind. “Would you like to undress me?”

Immediately her body language changed from being a defeated soul from being an empowered one. That was the ticket she needed to launch her out of her funk.

Emily got up out of her chair and was now standing in front of me. She was looking hungrily up into my eyes as she carefully guided my arms out of my shirt. She was about to start with my belt buckle when the kettle began to whistle.

“I will be right back,” I said leaving her standing there with my shirt held in her hands. The way she held my shirt was as if she had found a rare treasure after a long and difficult journey. I had to be careful I thought, as I looked back at her.

When I was in the kitchen making the instant coffee in a small red coffee pot I paused for a moment to think about how I might flirt with her. Being Catholic and all I knew the difference between lust and love. I did not know Emily that well and so I thought let us have some fun ... if only for me to give me a better sense of who she was and what was in her heart. It would be fun to tease her to a moment of supreme happiness then to step back and see what happened.

I carried the red coffee pot into the Atelier and there she was still holding my shirt in her hands. She had not moved at all. She followed me in the room with her eyes. I set the coffee pot down on the table and stepped back in front of her, taking my shirt from her hands. I tossed the shirt onto the back of my chair.

I could feel Emily’s warmth as I stood in front of her. She stood unmoving, unsure of herself. I smiled and guided her hands back to my belt buckle.

“Are you sure you want me to do this?” She asked almost in a whisper.

“We can stop if you don’t want to ...” I put my hand atop her’s. “I can go get out of my things in the washroom.”

Her hand was very warm. She stared down at my belt buckle. Her ear lobes were turning bright red. This told me she would continue on.

Emily gently pushed my hand away and started to open my belt buckle, then the button on the top of my pants. She slowly drew the zipper down and then opened the front of my pants. She looked up at my face as if searching for discernment. There was a mixture of hunger and worry in her eyes. How sweet, I thought.

I took my hand and gently drew my fingers down the side of her face. The worry in her eyes melted away. Her face was warm to my touch. Her skin was soft. This gave her the courage she needed to continue.

Emily guided my pants down my legs and I stepped out of them. She set them aside and stood up again.

“Do you want me to stop?” She asked.

“Why? Do you want to stop?” I asked her.

Emily hesitated. It was actually very moving to see how shy she was. It was then that I sensed how much of a quiet and introverted type Emily was, very much different than her sister Isabella. Sure I had only had a brief encounter with Isabella but that encounter was quite revealing.

It was also at this moment in the Atelier with Emily that I knew how wrong it would have been if the two of them were here together at the same time in the Atelier. Given the brazen behavior of her sister, if she were here I could see Isabella pushing Emily aside and tearing my underwear right off my body.

I looked down into Emily's soft eyes and guided her hands to my hips.

As she drew my briefs down she stared at the best of me and said "Peter Peter pumpkin eater!"

And so, Peter wagged and waggled as his name was called.

Coffee With Emily

There Emily stood, frozen in time and space. She was staring down at the best of me.

“Well if this is Peter ...” I crouched down and said “then this must be your pumpkin.” I pointed at the best of her.

She giggled looking down at herself. “I have never heard it described as a pumpkin.”

“Nor have I.” I stood up. “Well what will it be?”

With her hand she reached down and touched me with a finger. I let her swing me back and forth once or twice. She giggled. She was fascinated.

“It is just soft tissue with some blood inside it.” She was starting to tickle me and I was starting to get very aroused.

“I have never done this to a boy before. You’re so cute. ”

“I have never let a girl do this to me.” I placed a hand over myself.

“Aww ...” Emily tried to move my hand out of the way but I grabbed myself and would not let her have her way.

“Emily ... Emily ...” With my hand I guided her chin up. She looked up at my face. “What kind of a picture will you take today?”

“Of peter ...perhaps.” She pointed down at me.

“Fair being fair, will I get a chance to take a picture of ‘pumpkin’?”

Her face blushed as I called her *source de vie* ‘pumpkin.’ Emily turned away in silence. I walked over and sat in my chair crossing my legs.

“I don’t know ...” She sat down in her chair and tucked her legs under herself.

“Fair is fair ...” I repeated.

She took up her camera and began to fiddle with it. She turned to look at me.

“And how would you take a picture of ... ‘pumpkin’?”

I shrugged my shoulders. “Can’t say I have ever given such an idea any thought.” “If I do see your pumpkin ... it might speak to me ... and inspire me.” I had a broad smile on my face when I said this.

Like the different flowers in a garden, I knew that every woman had a different *Geist* to their intimacy. Some girls that I have seen have everything streamline to their bodies and others have large lips that flopped out of their thighs. To me, some of the *source de vie* I have encountered were inviting and others just

plain reason. As I looked over at Emily I wondered what she was like. I also wondered about her sister.

It was then that an odd thought crossed my mind. I really wanted to know how different the two sisters were, one from the other, for I all ready knew that Emily was shaped like a cello and her sister like a pear, and Emily's breasts I knew were fulsome, while I guessed Isabella's were less so. In contrast, I was curious to see how different Emily and Isabella were between their belly buttons and their knees. Perhaps it was because they were sisters. How different could they be?

Perhaps Emily did not see things the way I did, but I saw the feminine as far more beautiful than the masculine. Being a boy I had become indifferent to that what defines masculinity.

"You know ..." I said. "I don't think I will let you take a picture of peter today!" I said this to entice a response from her. "I don't know if I want to take a picture of your 'pumpkin.'"

"Oh ... and why not?" I was surprised that she was so disappointed.

"What if the day after I take a picture of pumpkin and you change your mind? What if a week or month, or year from now you suddenly get upset? As an artist I don't want that."

Emily went silent. There she sat looking at me. “Does that mean you might change your mind, if I take a picture of you?”

“It depends what kind of a picture.” I was curious what she had in mind.

“Maybe half hidden away?” She waved her hand as she said this.

“Maybe if you don’t take a picture of my face in your photograph, or include my name in your art.” I was open to her ideas.

“Maybe I could call it Peter’s peter?”

“Clever.” I laughed.

“So will you let me?” She asked hopefully.

I paused for a few seconds then answered her. “Not today ... “

Emily did not hide her disappointment.

“Maybe some other time.”

She set her camera back down on the table with a thud. “So what are we going to do today?” Emily asked.

I leaned forward and poured her some coffee. Then I handed Emily her coffee cup as I sat at the edge of my seat letting myself hang over the front of my seat.

When I saw she was staring at me I drew my legs together. Poured myself a cup of coffee then sat back in my seat, but this time not crossing my legs.

As I sipped my coffee I heard the click of her camera.

I smiled and sipped my coffee. Clever girl. She had waited until my coffee cup had hidden my face.

Not Much Mystery Left

I had not expected her back but Isabella did come back for a second and much more interesting visit to the Atelier. She arrived unannounced on a Friday evening, once again knocking on the door at an odd hour. It was nearly ten and I was just about to call it a night. I had been painting and had just cleaned my brushes.

When I opened the door she smiled at me and I smiled back and invited her in. This time she came dressed more casually and with an offering of a bottle of white wine.

“It’s Reisling ...” she offered the chilled bottle to me. “Is it ok? I can’t drink red wine.” I nodded and followed her into the Atelier. She kicked off her shoes then walked into the Atelier like she owned the place. She marched over to the easel. I had been working on a figurative painting and she took a moment to study the piece before setting herself down into a chair. She tucked her knees under her in a casual fashion. Her body language was very relaxed. What’s on her mind I asked?

I set the bottle down on the coffee table. “Let me get us some glasses.” I quickly popped into the kitchen, grabbed two long stemmed wine glasses and the wine bottle opener and returned to sit across from Isabella.

“Quite a nice painting,” she said as she pointed to the easel. “Did you have a model?”

I shook my head. “No I sometimes work off a picture.”

She smiled when I said the word picture. “A picture of my sister?” I realized then that the body type in the figurative painting did have some similarities to Emily.

“Does it look like your sister?” I asked Isabella. She shook her head.

I leaned forward and grabbed the neck of the bottle. “Well, the picture is out of an art book, but the body type is very similar to that of Emily”

“So you have seen her ... naked?” Isabella’s eyes bore into me.

“Not really. I took a portrait of her ... and she teased me from a distance.” I held my hands far apart to make my point.

“I don’t understand. You took a portrait of Emily ... naked.” There was a frown on her face.

“I took her portrait standing over her, with her head on a pillow and her hair streaming out. Yes, she was naked, but I was only toying with her.” I smiled proudly.

“Toying with her?” Isabella seemed incredulous. She went silent and leaned back in her chair.

I nodded. I opened the bottle of white wine and filled our two glasses. I offered her a glass of wine and then sat down as well. I leaned forward and offered her my glass “cheers.” She did not want to clink glasses and so silently we took a sip each of our own.

I leaned back in my chair. “Yes, I was toying with her. I wanted to see if she would do a figurative photograph with me.”

She had her head down and was stirring her wine around in her glass, watching the wine slosh about. Her hair fell forward and nearly covered her face. I wondered what she was thinking.

In a few seconds she stopped sloshing her wine about and I thought now was the time to break our awkward silence. “To be honest, I did not think you would come back to the Atelier.”

“I am surprised to be here myself.” She looked up at me. “But I feel compelled to be here.”

“Compelled?” I was surprised to hear her say this. “In what way are you compelled?”

“I can’t put it into words.” Isabella brushed her head as she said this. “When I was here the last time ...” She paused. I could see her face going flush.

“Was it the coin toss?” I asked her as I raised my glass and took a sip.

She took a sip and nodded.

I grinned. “Shall we toss again?” I asked her like I had promised last time she was here.

Isabella slowly nodded so I took a coin from my pocket and handed it to her. She was surprised I handed her the coin. “Here you do the toss.” She took the coin and asked me “heads or tails?”

I said heads and she tossed the coin. It came up heads. She said nothing but picked the coin up a second time. I said heads again and it came up heads again. She pursed her lips as if she was tasting something sour. But again she was silent. Isabella set the coin down at the center of the coffee table.

She took a sip from her glass, set it down again and then started to undo the buttons on her blouse.

“You don’t have to do this if you don’t want to.” I said gallantly.

“Fair is fair,” was her answer back to me.

“You don’t have to take everything off. You can leave your bra and panties on if you want.” I was not wanting to press my luck with Isabella. She struck me as someone with a volatile personality. I did not like working with volatile

models. I was just as keen to draw Isabella draped, or semi-draped. In fact, given what she was wearing it would make for a bold statement if her torso was bare and she was clothed the bottom half. She being so flat on top the drawing would be like Egon Shiele in his atelier, with a young maiden.

She looked up at me and gave me a vanilla smile, which did not really tell me much about her mindset. I just let her press on.

I stood quickly and gathered up a sketch book and a 2B drawing pencil and eraser. By the time I sat back down in my chair Isabella had removed her blouse. She was wearing a frilly white brassiere. Isabella stood and was beginning to undo her skirt when I said to her, “you don’t have to take your panties off if you don’t want to.” She stopped with her zipper and looked up at me. Her face was a bright red. She smiled but said nothing as she skinnied out of her skirt, then out of her panties too. She had a tuft of brown hair between her legs ... ‘another peroxide blond I thought.’ As she stood she also removed her brassiere and set it down with the rest of her clothes on the coffee table.

She knew that there was nothing to cover up top, so Isabella stood there a moment awkwardly covering her *source de vie* with her two hands. I looked up at her holding my pencil in my right hand at half arm’s length to gauge her proportions. The lengths seemed all right but the broadness of her hips was a bit pronounced. If she ever had a baby she would birth the child with ease, I thought, and then she might grow her breasts as well.

I wanted to see her backside but I figured it best not to press the moment. I looked down and opened my sketch pad.

Then she sat back down and picked up her glass and emptied it. She leaned forward and asked “may I have more wine please.” I got up out of my chair and poured her a second glass. As she leaned forward I saw for certain that her breasts were little mounds of fat that never grew. They were all but non-existent.

I walked back to my chair, took a sip from my wine glass then picked up my sketch book and pencil. As I studied her it was as if she read my mind for she drew her arms together hoping to puff her bosom up. It hardly made a difference.

Isabelle drew up one leg and then slowly opened up as if to distract me away from her missing bosom. It sort of worked. I could see that her source de vie was hidden by a fold of pink skin. She noticed that I was admiring her femininity and so she settled further back in her chair and stretched. Her top became less prominent and her bottom less so. I could see the little boy in her canoe starting to poke out.

I started to sketch her. All you could hear for a few minutes was my pencil racing across my sketch paper. I sketched for perhaps an hour with only the occasional word shared between us.

A thought struck my mind about fifteen minutes into our life drawing. Here was a woman who was prim and proper on the outside sitting before me with few inhibitions. Is it possible that as a woman she is inhibited in her day to day life but seeks some balance in her night life? I thought I might explore this a bit.

“May I ask you something ...but you don’t have to answer it if you don’t want to.”

Isabella was sitting like one of Henri Matisse’s famous Odalisques. “It depends what the question is.” She was being a coquette with me.

I pressed on. “What do you think I am going to ask you?”

“Whether we can make love ...” she said this in an amorous fashion.

“Well ... actually ... I was going to ask you about the first time you made love.” I emphasized the words ‘first time.’

“Oh!” She suddenly drew herself into a ball and now seemed small and vulnerable in the chair.

“You don’t have to answer me if you don’t want to.” I repeated, this time more softly.

Isabella was softly caressing her feet with her fingers. “Here, hand me my wine.” She pointed at the coffee table. It was only a short reach for her but I sensed she did not want to uncurl herself.

I stood up and walked carefully over to the table and picked up her glass and handed it to her. She took it and before I could turn she had pushed herself over and patted the corner of her chair. I sat awkwardly at the corner of her chair, she facing one way and I the other.

“You know ... just as you asked me that, I was thinking about my first time.” She looked into my eyes as she said this. I tried to fathom her emotions, the eyes being the window on a person’s soul and all, but at that moment I found Isabella’s emotions unfathomable.

“I had just turned sixteen ...” as she said this she opened her arms and turned her torso towards me. “He was older ...” I sat perfectly still.

“Much?” I asked? I could feel her warm. She nodded. She handed me her glass and I set it down on the table and as I turned back towards her she had moved one of her legs and was now scissoring my body. She wrapped her arms around me and drew me closer. I was now pressed up against her. I could feel that she was trembling.

“We had gone down to the banks of the Seymour river on a hike.” I tried to imagine the picture in my mind’s eye.

“It was a hot day in August and we both wanted to jump into the cold river water. So we did. But ...”

“But what ...” I was looking over her shoulder and down her back.

“Guess ...” She smiled coquettishly.

I turned my face to her’s “No bathing suits?” She nodded.

“Then?” I asked, knowing the answer.

“After we got out we were just laying there on the river bank. I wanted it ... and so did he.”

“Sounds very romantic.” Her eyes lit up as I said this.

“It was ...” She let go of me and leaned back. I stood up. She did not move, instead she sat there splayed out in a very provocative pose. Her remembrance had brought her to the pique of her arousal. She lowered her head to hide her face. I don’t think she wanted to look me in the eyes, probably because that would have gone to orgasm then and there.

I returned to my chair, quickly sat back down, picked up my sketch book and opened to a blank new page. I did not take my eyes off her as I drew. I was sure in a second or two she would close herself and that would be that.

But she didn't! She flicked her hair back from over her eyes. Isabella had looked up in my eyes. Her body went flush and she had goose bumps all over her.

“Next time I come I will draw you ... and I will ask you about your first love.”
As she said this her *source de vie* gushed like a river.

By the time our drawing session ended that evening, there was not much mystery left to Isabella. I had seen the other side to her.

Whose Turn Is It to Sit?

It is hard to walk on egg shells. Yet this is what I had to do the next time Emily came for a visit. It was the day after her sister Isabella showed up unannounced and sat for some drawings. I tried to be nonchalant when Emily telephoned and asked ‘to stop by’ that evening ‘for a visit.’ Perhaps I read too much in her words, but I imagined she would come, make a big, fugly scene and leave. (If you don’t know what fugly means ... ask.)

I once promised my late mother a t-shirt that reflected her constant angst. On the front of the t-shirt I wanted to write “*Worrying must work!*” and on the back, “ ... *because nothing I worry about comes to pass.*” Was I getting a bit like my mother? Is there such a thing as a worry gene? Did I have the gene and as a result was I too quick to worry?

That evening I hardly expected Emily to stay and do art. But she in fact did come (a bit early I may add); she did in fact stay (longer than I expected) and together we did in fact do some art (we had the best session yet!). It was her turn to sit for a picture but instead of rushing into the art she decided she wanted to chat a bit beforehand.

“Here,” she said handing me her latest print. It was a masterful photograph. My face was hidden by the coffee cup and my hand and so you could see the top of my head and my neck but nothing in between. My torso was bare but my knees were close enough together that you could tell I was *sans habillement*, but nothing was visible to shock anyone’s sensibility. You could

see the top of the tuft of hair between my legs and the fact my pelvis was bare and so everything was left to the imagination of the admirer of her artistry.

She had also composed the photograph in thirds. A smidgen more left and my shoulder would have been in the sweet spot of the golden ratio. Behind me, over that shoulder, were the artwork on the far wall and an ornate lamp I once snagged curbside at an old house that was being emptied that was gold and Gaudi. You could also make out a grand poster about Matisse and his art, a poster from the MOMA in New York, but unless you had eagle eyes you could only make out the name Matisse, but nothing else.

The Matisse poster still hangs on the wall fifteen years after it was first put up in the Atelier. There is a framed Picasso poster kicking about as well as an Escher black & white print but they still sit tucked away in a closet. Matisse sits well between the shock of Picasso and the geometry of Escher.

As I admired her photograph I could tell Emily was getting better at her artistry. Forcing her to compose just one picture was having a profound impact on her artistic praxis. I shared with her some of my thoughts and she sat and listened appreciatively.

“Can you make us some coffee?” she asked me. “I have had a long day.” As she said this with a long sigh I suddenly could see she was exhausted.

“Oh ... I am so sorry. I should have out the kettle on when you arrived.” She had wanted to share with me her latest photograph that it had slipped my mind

to ask her if she wanted something to drink. I stood up and paused. “Coffee this late in the evening?” I asked sympathetically.

“Tea won’t be enough to keep me awake. I had a sleepless night last night and only got a few hours sleep.”

“Oh ... if you want to chat, we can always leave the art to some other evening?” I knew from experience that when someone prefaced a statement in this way, they wanted to talk about what kept them up at night.

“No, I want us to do our art. And coffee is exactly what I need.” She picked up a bit. “My sister and I had a big fight.”

My heart jumped to my throat. “Oh ... about what?” I could hardly get the words out.

She waved her hand. “Go make the coffee and I will tell you.”

I hurried into the kitchen because I could feel my face growing flush. Ineptly I picked up the kettle and started to pour water in it, spilling as much as was getting into the kettle. Some of the water spilled down my front. “Danmed.”

From the atelier I heard Emily say “are you ok?”

I answered her back. “I just spilled some water on myself.” I paused wondering whether I should ask her. I decided I would. “And how are you

doing?” I held the kettle in mid-air and held my breath straining to hear her voice.

“I wish I did not have an older sister!” I heard her exclaim.

I set the kettle down on the element and turned it full up. “And why is that?” I listened closely.

“My sister is a real bitch!” She chocked the words out.

I walked back to the main room and stopped at the entrance leaning against the wall. “What happened?” I did not want to be too close to her in case she started to vent into me.

“For some reason she dredged up something that happened years ago.” I let out a sigh. So it wasn’t bout Isabella sitting for me last night.

“What was it?” I stepped into the room and sat myself down.

Emily’s fists were tight and her knuckles were white. “I don’t know if I should tell you.”

“We could talk about something else ...” I did not want to push Emily, but at the same time I was curious to hear what caused the blow-up between Emily and her wound up older sister.

Before she could decide the kettle started to whistle. I am glad for the interlude because I suspected if she had answered immediately she would have said ‘lets,’ but by the time I had mixed the instant coffee in the coffee pot and dug out some chocolate covered graham cookies she had settle down.

I set the tray with the coffee, cups and cookies down on the table and poured her a cup and offered it to her. Then I offered some cookies. She grabbed two and so I set the plate down in the table in front of her. “Take as many as you want.”

“Thanks!” She sipped her coffee. My experience with women was that sometimes they drowned their sadness by eating, and what better to drown their sadness than to eat chocolate.

I poured myself a cup of coffee and sat back in my seat watching Emily. I did not say a word but waited for her to break the silence with whatever she wanted to say.

I sensed she was muddled and trying to sort out what to say. We were silent for perhaps two minutes. Then she said “Aren’t you going to say something?”

I smiled and said, ‘so what did the two of you fight about?’

Emily stood and turned her back to me. “Last night my sister brought up something we had years ago agreed never to talk about again?” There was a great deal of emotion in her voice.

Again I said, “we could talk about something else ...”

She looked over her shoulder at me. She had a determined look on her face and continued. It has to do with our first times ...”

I played dumb. “First time?” but I knew what she meant.

“You know ... the first time we both did it with a boy?” She turned away and her body language told me she was embarrassed to talk about it.

“Am I old enough to listen to your story?” I thought I might tease her with a bit of humor to take the edge off the subject. Sex is a touchy subject, no more so when a woman and a man talk about it for the first time.

“Stop being so silly!” She pouted as she said silly. “I am being serious.”

“One’s first time ...for a girl it’s special isn’t it? I said this to assuage her.

“Yes it is. Isn’t it for a boy too?” Emily asked this with genuine curiosity.

“I guess so. But I imagine it is a bigger deal for a girl.” I had heard women talk about this very thing in a coffee shop once. They did not realize their conversation was carrying over the table next to them where I was sitting. While the women talked I hid myself behind a newspaper I was reading. I wish I had written down the dialogue for it was a most amazing look into the

female sexual psyche. Their whole conversation hinged around whether they should let a man come inside of them.

I wondered if Emily or her sister let their first encounter with sex get as far as that. I could see Isabella chickening out and not letting it get that far. I was unsure about what Emily would have done. I made myself a mental note to ask her. I smiled to her as I thought this.

My smile gave her the courage to continue. “Yes it is. The first time is when we lose our virginity.”

I teased Emily a bit. “Boys are virgins too, until they do it the first time.”

“It’s not the same. Girls ... well girls have you know ... “

“What do they have?” I didn’t need to ask, for I knew.

Only once in my life had I seen a true virgin and true to my morals I refused to deflower her. We hugged and kissed and well were intimate in other ways but I refuse to break her hymen for her. A few days later some rake did it for her, and well, we were never intimate again because the rake did more than just deflower her, he gave her something simplex that will curse her for the rest of her life. When she told me it was a difficult moment for me because she said had I deflowered her ... and not the rake ... she would not be cursed for the rest of her life. Now that is a Catholic dilemma if there ever was one! What made the whole story rather sad and pathetic was when we were being

intimate but not sexual, I had pleaded with her to protect her reproductive health and not ‘do it’ until she was married.

What Emily told me would indeed be the cause of friction and conflict between sisters. When sixteen year Isabella had told her she had done it for the first time with her ‘friend’, in a few days the same rake was chasing after fourteen year old Emily. Given Isabella’s personality, it was a foolish thing but Emily figured she would do it too ‘for the first time’ at the same place and with the boy.

When Isabella found out it was too much for her! The rake told Isabella that Emily was a better lay and that Isabella needed to try harder. And so began a new chapter of intense rivalry between the two sisters over boys and well ... the things that boys do to girls.

I frowned when Emily said she had done it at age fourteen.

“What’s wrong?” Emily asked me.

“Fourteen?” I tried not to be judgmental but I could not help myself. “Isn’t it a bit young?”

“It’s my body!” I could not disagree with her assertion.

“When I was fourteen I was barely looking at girls.” I tried to remember that far back but it was hard.

“Well, what do you mean by barely?” It sounded like Emily was picking for a fight.

“I went to a Catholic school.” I was trying to change the subject.

“Didn’t you notice that girls in your class wear growing boobs?” I thought it funny that Emily would say boobs and so I chuckled.

“Yes ... I vaguely remembered that some of my classmates began to sprout ... but not all. Some were early bloomers. ”

“Well I was one of them and my sister was not.” She brought her hands to her bosom and pushed her breasts around a tad.

“Doesn’t your sister have breasts?” I threw this out to see whether Emily knew that I knew the answer to this question from direct experience.

“No ... Isabella is as flat as a board.” Emily was harsh but accurate. I had seen Isabella *sans habillement*. At that moment I knew that Isabella did not tell Emily she has stopped in to the Atelier.

“It sounds like the two of you are competitors ...” I was fishing.

“Sort of ... she likes to steal my friends and thinks that I am always out to steal hers.”

Emily watched me for a moment as I paused and took another sip of my coffee. Aha! I thought. I looked down into my coffee cup and saw the reflection of my eyes in the murky dark water. Now I understand what Isabella is up to! It isn't merely about the Atelier and art, it is about other things; things of the heart.

Without looking up I ventured forth with an explosive question. "Does your sister like stealing boyfriends away from you too?"

"You are clever ... she's tried more than once." It was as if I had poured salt on an open wound. I hurriedly took another sip from my coffee and set the empty cup down on the table. I was so nervous the cup and saucer rattled as I set it down. Emily laughed.

"Well, the cat is out of the bag ..." I said.

"It sure is!" And so Emily started to tell me what happened when her sister found out about her first time. It became a sort of foot race between the two siblings, who could be bed by the most boys.

I looked at Emily with a strange mix of awe and disgust. By sixteen she had bed more boys than there are months in the year. Yes, and she had bedded them, not the other way around. By sixteen gone was her sense of modesty.

"Can I ask you something?" I figured it was now or never.

“Sure ...”

“Did you let all the boys come inside you?”

She laughed ... and for a good twenty minutes I listened and did not interrupt her as she described the big boys and the little ones, the little ones with members no bigger than their small finger. There was Dicks, and Toms and Harrys in such numbers that I let their names fly by me without any recognition. All I took note of was their first letter. Only the letters Z and Q were not represented in her list of ‘boys she had bedded.’

Then she was stopped to catch her breath. I stood up and poured her more coffee and filled my cup too and sat back down to take a long draft. Her love life so far was more exciting than that of a libertine Parisienne. For some strange reason my throat was dry. Maybe it was apprehension. I thought of my friend who ended up with Herpes, the one I refused to deflower, and I thought of Emily and wondered how many times she had to rush to the doctors and get a ‘day after pill.’

I just sat there and so Emily asked me what I thought. I just shrugged my shoulders and smiled “and your sister?” Oh well, it was after all Emily who had brought it up.

“She lags far behind me. That I know for sure.” She brushed her hair back with her hand as she said this.

“And how do you know this?” I realized this was a bit to awkward to ask the instant I asked Emily.

“How do you think I know?” She almost scoffed at me when she said this.

I pressed on. “I imagine you wouldn’t hear this from your big sis!”

“Obviously not! I know because the boys told me. They first try her and when she says no they come to me ... lil’ sis!”

“So people talk?” I asked this slowly and with false trepidation.

“Come one ... boys like to boast of their conquests. What made my job easy is that once a boy had enjoyed one of us they wanted to enjoy us both.”

My pulse quickened. “Both? At the same time?” That would be a boy’s ultimate fantasy.

Emily paused then she took a sip from her coffee. It seems I had taken the wind out of her sails. When she finally spoke her demeanor had changed.

“There was one boy, Francis, who invited me to bed once and right in the middle of our sex there was a knock at his door and who was there but my sis. He was sure she was all ready to jump into bed with us.”

“And were you surprised?” It seemed a legitimate question to ask.

“I wasn’t surprised, but boy was Isabella angry.” Emily had a big smile on her face when she said this.

“It was one of her ‘boyfriends’ wasn’t it?” I asked and all she did was nod.
“What happened next?”

“Well, Francis wanted Isabella to jump into bed with us and join our fun.”

“And you? What did you do?”

“I just sat up in bed and enjoyed the circus as the two of them fought and argued.” Emily had a funny expression on her face. It was a mixture of pain and pleasure.

“Your sister must have been furious!”

“Oh she was, but you know what?”

“What?”

There was a dramatic pause. “Francis offered to do anything for her if she stayed ... and so she did stay and well, we did have a threesome!”

I was honestly surprised to hear this. “Francis must have been happy!”

“Not really. My sister insisted Francis let her tie him to the bed.”

“Why were you pleased?”

“It was one less boy we didn’t have to fight over and he told all his friends and well ...”

“Well what?”

“I watched as Isabella teased him closer and closer and closer and then stopped as he was about to pop. She drove him crazy to punish him and then didn’t let him come.”

“He must have howled like a banshee!”

“More like swear like a truck driver. But he later admitted he enjoyed it. Then she just left him erect and dripping.”

“And what did you do?” I tried to predict what she did.

“I told him to close his eyes and as I dressed I talked dirty to Francis until well ... it proved too much for him ... and he made a mess” She giggled.

“Then what did you do?”

“I untied one of his hands and left as quick as I could. He came chasing after me down the hallway of his apartment building wearing nothing more than his pillow.”

I laughed. Even Hollywood could not dream something like this up.

Emily continued. “When word got out what had happened both Isabella and I earned a rather unique reputation!” She said the word reputation with a flurry.

I was so taken aback by this that “I imagine” was all I could say. “When was this?”

“When Isabella was in grade 12 and I was in grade 10. Francis was one of her classmates.” Emily said this with a sense of pride. She was now at university and was working fulltime and so I thought back maybe eight years ago. “Things sort of changed when she left high school and went off to university.”

“And just how did it change?” I asked her.

“She started to find herself a new circle of friends and sort of stopped having so much fun.”

“And you?”

“Whenever she gave someone a cold shoulder, which was quite often, they would seek me out, and well that left me sort of *very popular*. But I had also changed too.” There was a wicked sort of smile on her face when she said ‘I had changed.’

I took another sip from my coffee. I had not really gotten to know Emily well yet but something in my heart said that her fetishes were part of her change. I imagined Isabella as being inhibited and vanilla while Emily was the wild, rebellious one.

In a real sense our conversation had passed the point of no return so I pressed on. “In what way had you changed?”

“I began to enjoy myself in new ways. I would tie the boys down. I would blind fold them. I would tease them until well a mere puff of breath would cause them to pop. I even well ...”

“Well what?” Emily knew I had to ask.

“Well ... “ she looked over at me for a moment before she continued. “I started to be intimate with girls too.”

“Oh ...” I had not expected her to say this. This revelation brought out an entirely new angle to our conversation. “I see ...”

When I said ‘I see ...’ she stopped and frowned at me. “No you don’t see ...I did not chase after them, they sort of chased after me.”

“I see ...” it was dumb for me to say this lame phrase a second time, but despite its awkwardness it kept Emily to her story.

“It wasn’t what you think. It was one of my classmates who took a liking to me. She had a crush on one of the boys I was being intimate with and I think she sort of figured that if she became intimate with me she would eventually become intimate with her crush.”

“And did it work?”

“It sure did. I set it up that way.”

“You don’t have to tell me this story if you don’t want to.”

“It was a bit of a set up. The boy came over. I got him all worked up and blind folded and all tied down. Then she undressed and she mounted over him and while he was enjoying her I removed his blind fold and left the two of them to sort things out. The last I heard the two of them were still together.”

“So you were a match maker for some of your classmates?” I gave Emily the benefit of the doubt. Match maker seemed so much a better word than concubine, or something worst.

I think Emily picked up my nuance. “More like a sex therapist.” She giggled as she said this. Then she went silent. I looked over at her and could tell that Emily was tired of talking and exhausted.

Time to get back to the art I thought. “Whose turn is it to sit?”

Her face lit up. With a big smile she said, “mine!” She got up out of her chair and started towards the bathroom. Emily stopped suddenly and turned towards me. “It seems silly ...”

“What seems silly?” I asked.

“After all we have talked about today ... that I would have to leave the room to undress.”

I leaned back in my chair and put my hands behind my head and crossed my right leg atop my left. “Yes .. it does seem silly.” I smiled.

So Emily just stood there in front of me and started to undress. I had worked with artist’s models before but I knew of no artist’s model who would do this for me. Part of the beauty of the female form is the way it is hid behind the mystique of clothes. When a woman undresses there is something almost spiritual in the way they remove their clothing. I watched Emily as she started to undress. She was not in any rush to disrobe for me.

She undid the skirt she was wearing and let it drop to the floor. She slowly undid the buttons on her blouse and removed it. Then she stooped down to pick up her skirt. As she did this the cleavage to her bra opened somewhat and I could spy the softness of her. Emily stood and turned her back to put her skirt and blouse across the back of her chair. She started to play with the clasp on the front of her pink bra when she realized she had her back turned to me. She slowly turned her head over her right shoulder and looked at me for a few seconds before slowly turning to face me. She had a funny expression on her face. I could not make out what she was thinking.

But again, I didn't have to for Emily turned and knelt down in front of me and smiled. "Would you like to do the honors?" looking down at the clasp as she spoke.

My hands were shaking as I tried to unclasp her, but the first try was frustratingly unsuccessful. I toiled and toiled and toiled, until finally I leaned forward so that our cheeks were nearly touching. I could feel her heat and I knew she could feel mine. I stared at the clasp. It was hard to focus on the clasp given what lay behind it. It seemed a simple thing but it was meant to stay close and not spring open. Damned the fellow who designed it, I thought.

I tried a second time but once again I manhandled it and it would not part. Emily looked down at my clumsy hands and giggled, "having trouble?" I smiled and drew my hands away to collect my thoughts. Obviously I was approaching the whole challenge the wrong way.

She took my hands in hers and said “be gentle.” She guided my hands to her clasp. The third time, I lovingly toyed with the clasp and it opened. Emily had taught me an important lesson, as she had perhaps to several other men: not to be a man when wanting to un-encumber a women of her intimate apparel. I was third time lucky.

Her bra sprung open and her breasts were hid partly within her bra, as a cut grapefruit within its peel. She stood and let time hang for a moment. I lifted the camera and focused on her partly hidden breasts. She knew that I was not wanting to make an evening of our art and so instead of letting her bra slip off her shoulders, she did something else.

I shifted the camera downwards towards the mystery of her and took the one and only picture of the evening.



The Mystery of Emily

The Allegory of the Apple

I really can't remember what picture I took of Emily that evening. It was after all fifteen years ago. I vaguely remember I may have gotten her to sit on her legs with with her back to me and then did a picture of her back in the classical Man Ray violin d'Ingre theme. Since she did not wear a bra nor underwear I remember that there was only a thin line of her pant waist.

We talked some more as we waited for her thin line to disappear. I let her talk and I was all ears. It was like open the opening the gates of a water sluice. Emily felt compelled to tell me more about her conquests and her fetishes. It was an eye opener for me listening to her as she said all the fun she had with her 'boy toys.'

She had a philosophy. Her boys '*came in three varieties*' she said; those that wanted to conquest, those that wanted to be cuckolded and those that were just perverse."

I picked up the camera and set it on a tripod. I asked her "which of the three types she most enjoyed?"

She laughed. "Once you have had a boy inside you it takes away the novelty. So I first ask them what they wanted. If it was conquest, I told them that once they had me they could never had me again."

"And ...?"

“Some of the boys would say ‘so be it’ ... but ...”

I started to focus on her back. “But what?”

“But ... I would drop them there and then. I just didn’t want to be someone’s conquest or their one night stand.”

“So what then?”

“I enjoyed the boys who wanted to be cuckolded and those that wanted to do something perverse.”

“Cuckold. You used that word a few times. What does that mean?”

“Cuckold ... is when a rooster becomes a hen.”

“Oh! You didn’t really ... you know.”

She giggled. “No I didn’t. That would be cruel. But there are other things a girl can do to cuckold a boy.”

“Really, such as ...” I knew she was teasing me, but she was after all the one sitting there naked and I was the one on the other side of the camera.

“I am not going to give away all my secrets. You will have to find out for yourself.”

I laughed. “Don’t you wish!”

I walked over to her and stood beside Emily. From this angle I could see down across her breasts and down to her tuft of hair. She turned to face me.

“Don’t you want to hear about the perverse boys?” She asked.

“Maybe some other time?” Indeed I was curious but I thought that I had heard enough of her fetishes for one night. Besides it was getting late. I walked back to the camera and looked again through the view finder.

“How’s it going on back there?”

“I’m all ready. Are you?”

She nodded. “You sound very tired. Would you prefer we just call it a night and you can go home to bed?” I wasn’t keen to continue if she was going to be ornery.

“Get on with it.” She snapped. “My knees are beginning to hurt.”

I suddenly had an idea. “I want to try something.”

“What?” There was a tired skepticism in her voice.

“Don’t worry, it is not something weird.” I looked down at the camera and noticed it had an electronic option to let the camera adjust f/stop and the like. I pressed the button and the camera came alive, all by itself. “I want to just turn the lights off and have one bright light.”

“Oh! I thought ... since we have been talking about weird things ... that you might do something weird.” There was still tiredness to her voice.

“Why would you say that?” I was a bit defensive.

“You boys are like that, when you see a naked girl. All you want to do is weird things!”

“Not all boys are like that.” I came quick to my defence, then I thought I might have some fun with her. “Besides ...”

“Besides what?” She turned on her knees so that she was now nearly in profile. She had a surprised look on her face. It much improved the composition, so I decided then and there to be less Man Ray, lifted the camera and took a photograph. Immediately after I took the shot she lifted a hand to coddle her breast.

I smiled. “It is in our programming to be a bit weird, don’t you think?”

“Really! So what are you saying?” She was intrigued.

“You show us a naked girl and well things go into autonomous mode for boys. We have no control over our physiological responses.” I closed my legs together as I said this.

Emily giggled. “Yes, you don’t do you?”

“It’s not just that.” I pressed on. “There are urges as well.”

“Urges ... what kind of urges?” Emily took her hand away from her breast and leaned over, holding herself up with that same hand. She was teasing me, for effect.

I turned off the electronic features on her camera and set it down on the table. I knew if I didn’t do this I would break our cardinal rule and take a second picture. That would probably break the trust between us.

Emily suddenly stood up and walked over to pick up the camera. “I think I want to take a picture of you.” This brashness on her part was quite unexpected. She held her camera in front of her source de vie and just stood there. “Well ... are you game?” Emily wasn’t tired anymore but had found herself vital energy.

“This is a bit weird,” I said throwing the whole weirdness thing back at her. “I have never had a naked artist do art with me their naked artist model.”

Emily giggled. “This will be a first for us both.”

“Well ...” I stood up from my chair. “There is always a first time for everything.”

I started to walk towards the bathroom. “Where do you think you are going?” Emily jested.

“To the bathroom to get out of my things.” I pointed at the bathroom.

She shook her head, set down the camera and pounced towards me. I knew what she had on her mind and I decided not to stop her. She started with my necktie, loosened it provocatively and then drew it over my head. As she did this her breasts cascaded back down across her torso. I had never seen such splendor before. I could plainly see that she was aroused.

Then Emily started with the buttons down the front of my shirt, and then the buttons on my cuffs. She left my shirt on as she started on my socks then my pants. She was swift! Obviously skilled in this praxis. I was suddenly chilled as she yanked my pants down my legs. As she did all this she was careful to rub her soft body against me in a planned and notoriously provocative fashion, caressing one of my legs with her right breast and the other with her bare thigh.

Her tease was having the desired effect on me so that when it came to decide between shirt and my jockeys, well I was apparently in full form. She left my shirt on but tugged down the penultimate piece of my clothing. Then she suddenly stopped and tumbled back into a chair giggling uncontrollably.

It had taken Emily less than a minute to render me in this state. There I stood covered by just my plain white shirt, unbuttoned and well hiding nothing.

“You boys are so crazy looking!” She pointed at the best of me when she said this.

“Maybe we are here for you girl’s comic relief?” I shook myself slowly from side to side and well ... she giggled even more wildly.

“Or for some other relief?” She purred as she said that.

As I looked at her provocative stance I didn’t need to ask but asked I did.
“Like?”

“Sexual tension ... silly!” She set her hands down over her *source de vie*.

“You don’t need us boys to accomplish that!” I laughed I started to sit back down keeping my shirt on.

“Aren’t you going to take your shirt off?” She waved her hand playfully as she said this.

I stopped and obliged her then sat down. “So miss pornographer ...”

“Photographer!” Abruptly Emily corrected me.

“Oh ... excuse me. Miss photographer! So what shall it be then?” I leaned forward in my chair and put my arm on my knee like Rodin’s thinker. “Standing ... sitting ... laying back?”

“All three!” She leaned back in her chair, holding on to the arms of the chair and giggled giddily.

The effect her body movement had on me was magical. But then she probably knew the effect she would have on me. It is strange how women’s breasts affect men. Perhaps it is a remnant of our earliest remembrances when we are being suckled at our mother’s breasts. Most men are moved more by the bosom beauty of the top than the hidden mysteries from below.

“I think I want you laying back.” She pointed to the couch. We both stood and started to compose the shot. The first pose didn’t quite work with me on my back and well the backdrop cluttered with hangings on the wall. So I got up and dug out a white bed spread and jury rigged a hanging from the wall and over the couch.

I lay back down and Emily tried to compose a good shot from different angles. But a man's masculinity is a bit of a distraction when it comes to photography, so I set a hand over myself and well Emily said it still it did not work.

So I rolled over on my side and she began to think of possibilities. "Do you have any fruit?" She asked.

"I might have some apples kicking around." I was startled and amused at the same time by her question.

"Go get them" Emily asked and so I did.

While I was in the kitchen I dug out a plate to put the apples on and then decided to cut one of the apples in two. I walked back into the Atelier and set the plate of apples down in front of me and resumed my pose. Then I grabbed one of the apples in my left hand and held it forward as if presenting it to the viewer.

Emily lifted the camera to her eye, peered through the view finder. "Won't you well ..."

I shook my head. I knew what she wanted but I was too embarrassed to oblige. She also knew not to push the point, because I was firm in my conviction that I would not let her photograph the best of me.

I half expected her to take a picture but instead she said "your feet .."

I looked down at my feet. “What about my feet?”

“Your feet ... The volume is in imbalance. We need something to fill the volume near your feet!” She looked around the room but could not find anything that might fit her need. Then she smiled “I have the perfect thing in my car!” She started to pick up her clothes then changed her mind. I watched as she dashed into the bathroom and came back wrapped in my big green robe. She grabbed her keys and said “Don’t move, I’ll be right back.” And out she dashed from the Atelier leaving the front door partly ajar. I knew this because I could feel the cool evening air come in through the front door and leave through my partially opened sliding door leading to the balcony.

In a moment she was back, closing the front door and lugging a large whicker basket that had a most unique shape. Emily placed the basket at my feet. When she walked back to her camera she kept the robe on and held the camera up to her eye.

To get things perfect she moved the large whicker basket, tilting it ever so slightly towards me. As I watched her do this it suddenly dawned on me what the whicker basket reminded me of.

I knew that this would be the shot and so I made sure I had tucked myself completely in, and crossed my top leg partly over my bottom one to make doubly sure I was not hanging out.

This time she took the picture and as she took it Emily said “I think I will call this one ... *The Allegory of the Apple.*”



The Allegory of the Apple

An Evening With Isabella!

It was a good three weeks before Isabella next got in touch with me. One morning, quite out of the blue, she telephoned. This time instead of meeting up in the Atelier that evening she insisted I come for ‘dinner’ at her place around 7. I had nothing better planned that night and so against better judgment I accepted her invitation for ‘dinner.’ But I was under no illusions that she had something else in mind and that I might end up as her main course. What kind of wine, I thought, do you serve if you are the main course – champagne or sangria?

I set down the telephone and then realized there was a pattern to her interaction with me. Every fourth week, almost like clockwork Isabella would enter into my world for a few hours, then step out of it. I knew enough about women to know there were two times in their reproductive cycle that they wanted to be around men. One when they were menstruating, as a sort of bulwark against the uncertainties of the world, and the other time when they were ovulating, hoping to perhaps have sex and perpetuate the human species. I knew that she was very much her own woman and so Isabella needed no bulwark against the world.

Why I accepted her invitation of an evening with Isabella’s is easy to understand given the story that Emily had told me of the rivalry between the two sisters. If instead of being the man in this game I was a woman being invited to a man’s apartment I might have declined, but I was intrigued to see where Isabella was wanting to take things. I was curious to see how far things

would go and whether she would, like Emily had told me Isabella had asked of other men, ask me to father a baby for her. I accepted because I wanted to see if Isabella had ‘babies on the brain?’

This was undiscovered country for me. I had been previously married and my ex had promised me a family, but she did not keep many of her most solemn promises to me. About half way through our twelve years of marriage she had been unfaithful to me with a bisexual workmate. When I found out she and I had a few heated words and it was then that she finally told me she didn’t ‘want’ children. I also had myself tested for communicable diseases, and passed with flying colors. She was not so lucky.

And when I pressed her on her solemn promise to me she finally confessed she was barren and could not ‘have’ children. It was something about having ovarian cysts. She said it was genetic, but when I asked her father he confided in me that she in fact she had had a fling with one of her profs at university who slept around and as a result she had scarred her reproductive system. After her unfaithfulness to me we never were intimate again. After we were divorced, and she took up with another man, she had a double oophorectomy.

It was a shock to find out that she knew she was barren before we had been married and had played me for a fool. Being Catholic and loving children I was profoundly disappointed. I pressed the idea of adopting small children but no she did not want to ‘burden herself’ with children.

Across from where we lived at the time was a foster home. There was one little boy in particular who was looking for a home. I had chatted with him before and even played with him from time to time. I found out how much he wanted a family of his own one Saturday morning when he came running out of their house screaming and crying at the top of his lungs and began to run crazily up the steep street that ran in front of my home. I was out cutting the grass that morning and the foster mum yelled to me “go after him ... he will hurt himself!” So off I dropped what I was doing and gave chase.

When I finally caught up with the four year old he was sitting on the curb at the very top of the steep street crying his eyes out. By then the fire department and police had been called out and they gathered in front of the foster home, sirens wailing and lights ablaze. I sat down next to the little boy and motioned for the others to stay where they were. “What’s wrong little one?” I asked him

He told me that his mother had just told him that her new boy friend didn’t want him and so she said she didn’t want him either. Imagine that ... rejected by his own mother! The little boy was frightened and alone. I told him not to be frightened and that he was not alone and that I knew for certain that his mother would change her mind.

We talked for perhaps ten minutes and then he let me pick him up and I carried him down the hill to the waiting arms of the foster mom. His real mom had been told to leave by the police. When he was told his mother had left the little boy started to cry again and it was only when I was holding him that he

finally stopped. I held him close for nearly twenty minutes telling him funny stories until he fell asleep in my arms. I carried him up the stairs and laid him in his bed and then went back to my place but decided not to finish cutting the grass for I knew that would wake the little boy up.

When I had been inside my home for perhaps ten minutes there was a knock at the door and it was the foster mom. “He loves you the little one ... why don’t you adopt him?” Before I could say anything my ex slammed the door in the foster mom’s face. I was shocked and well ... in the aftermath of this sad event it became evident that my ex really did not want anything to do with children!’ If you could imagine my profound sadness!

Nonetheless it was still six years before I finally had to part company with her, but for other reasons. I was working three jobs and she was spending more money than I was making. No she did not work to support us. When my health started to fail I sat her down one afternoon at our kitchen table and told her that my doctor said that ‘if I keep this pace up I will be dead by the time I was fifty.’ Her answer to this, and I am not making this up was ... “that’s ok dear, we have life insurance!” Hells ... bells!

The whole children thing be muddled me.

When Isabella invited me for dinner, it had been only a few years since I had been divorced. I was unencumbered, yet I was still thinking about my legacy. This evening with Isabella would be as intriguing to me if not to find out my true emotions when it comes to ‘making babies.’ Would I get cold feet?

Would I thrust ahead without any inhibitions? Do I have ‘babies on the brain too?’

I arrived a few minutes early. Isabella lived in a tall apartment tower with a gated entrance. When I got to her place I had remembered the address to the apartment building but forgotten the number of her apartment. All I could remember was that she was on the ninth floor. There were six apartments on the ninth floor, so I started with 901 and buzzed. No answer. 902 ... thank God ... no answer. I was about to press 903 when out of the back of my mind I thought, try 906. I buzzed 906, but there was no answer. I waited a minute before buzzing again. This time a familiar voice answered the buzz.

“You’re early!”

“Yes ... sorry about that. Do you want me to walk once around the block?”

“No ... I am in the bath. I will buzz you in and leave my front door unlocked.”

“Oh ... are you sure you don’t want me to come back later?” I was only ten minutes early. I wondered why she was in the bath a few minutes before expecting a dinner visitor.

My answer was in the way of a buzz, as the front door unlocked and I stepped into the lobby. The lobby was a chilly, watery blue. The carpet was this blue, as was the tiling on the bottom half of the wall, and even the top half of the

walls were painted the same color. The ceiling was a mixture of brass ornaments and the same now almost sickly blue. So much for taking my mind off the bathing beauty!

There were also some water blue vintage lounge chairs and copies of the local newspapers on two tables in the lobby. Perhaps I should have dawdled in the lobby to let her finish before I went up in the elevator but legs were on autopilot. I slowly walked through the lobby, past the post box in the wall and up some stairs and then over to one of the two elevators around the corner to the right.

It was an old apartment building and the elevators, like the building, were perhaps forty years old. They were rickety and smelled of the many hundreds of apartment dwellers who had inhabited the place. The doors were slow to close and the lighting barely enough to allow me to see my reflection in the aged stainless steel walls. The walls distorted me so that I was a squiggle. I smiled and a smirked was reflected back. I pressed the nine button and it was an eternity before the door closed and the elevator started its rickety accent. It took nearly a minute to go up nine floors.

The doors to the elevator opened and what appeared in front of me but a dismal hallway of old water blue carpet with blanch white walls. There were a few incandescent light fixtures glowing dimly to meet the aged angst of the building.

The short journey from the bright outdoors to the undiscovered country that awaited me should have been an omen to me. I hesitated before I stepped out of the elevator and suddenly the doors closed and before I could press the door open button the elevator was ascending. With my luck the elevator went all the way up to the penthouse! The doors opened and an oddly dressed elder couple stepped into the elevator. I stepped over to in front of the elevator panel and pressed the ninth floor button. The elder couple pressed the lobby button and all but ignored me. We had to wait a life time for the doors to close and the old machinery to start working.

The elderly couple spread themselves to fill almost the entire floor of the little box. She stank of inexpensive perfume and he of obnoxious eau de cologne. I coughed. It quickly became too much for me and my eyes started to water and my chest started to feel tighten. I held my breath and wished the elevator on with my will. My eyes were glued on the descending numbers over the door. It was now a battle against the clock. Would I be able to hold my breath long enough or would I have to take in a lungful of their fragrances?

When you are waiting time takes on a psychological timbre, slowing appreciably. A second seems like a minute and a minute well near an hour. We were now at ten and time had come to a stop. I could feel my face growing crimson. The elderly couple were gauging me out of the corner of their eyes. I coughed again and was about to take in another breath when finally at the ninth floor the elevator came to a jerking stop and I quickly hopped out of the box. I gasped for air. As the door closed behind me I could hear the elderly

man say with strong British accent “what an odd fellow.” Odd was a matter of perspective, I thought.

I all but staggered my way to 906 and knocked on her door. I noticed the door was ajar and so I pushed it open. “Hello!” From within I heard a voice “... come in ...” I slowly and hesitantly stepped into her apartment.

Isabella’s apartment was well lit and airy. The furniture was classical Danish and there were a few nice paintings on the walls. A door was partly open to my right. “Is that you?” she asked.

“Yes ... it is me.” I glanced down at my watch. I could hear bath water being disturbed. I was bang on time and she was still in the bath. What’s the scoop I wondered.

“Make yourself comfortable ...” she said through the door.

“Listen, if you need more time for your bath I can come back in an hour?”

“Oh no ... don’t do that.” There was a pause. “You know ...” Here it comes, I thought. “I have sat for you in the Atelier ...”

Yes she had, I thought but ... what was her game?

“Here come and chat with me.” When she said this I slowly walked over to the bathroom and pushed the door open with my foot. There Isabella was in

a bubble bath. You could see her head and shoulders, and one of her knees but everything else was immersed behind bubble. She looked up at me.

“My God, what’s wrong? You look green!” I looked at myself in the bathroom mirror. She was right! In the sharp azure fluorescent glare of her bathroom lights and the surrounding pink motif I indeed exhibited a green hue. In twenty words or less I explained about the elderly couple and the elevator. “Ah ... the McArthurs. They’re a bit odd!” The word *odd* had made its third appearance in less than three minutes. Isabella was amused. The story cut the tension of encountering Isabella in her bath tub. Like a burlesque comedy the whole ‘dinner’ routine seemed to be falling into its own surrealism.

She handed me a face cloth and the soap. “Wash my back?” she demanded of me. A few minutes ago I was ready to refuse her but now the circumstances seemed different. I would let her raise the ante in our game a bit and enjoy where that would take us.

She leaned forward and an abyss at the small of her back opened in the bubbles behind her. I dipped the cloth and soap into the bath water. The bath water was lukewarm. It dawned on me that she had been waiting for me for some time. So quickly and with vigor I washed her back.

When I was finished I handed her back the cloth and soap. Then I sat down on her terry towel covered pink toilet seat cover. “Can I ask you something?”

Isabella had taken the soap and cloth and was now washing her face. “Sure, ask me anything.”

Anything! Anything! I stopped myself and wondered if she would answer if I asked her the \$ 64,000 question ...am I here for her merely ‘to make a baby?’

I waited for her to finish washing and rinsing her face. Her face was now crimson. Isabella set the face cloth and soap on the edge of the bath tub then gazed up at me. Her eyes sparkled. “So what do you want to ask me?”

I somehow knew she had played this game with boys before and wondered what had come of it. So to tease her I put my hand in the water between her legs making sure I touched one of her thighs high up her leg. She flinched. “The water is quite cold. Do you want me to add some hot water?”

“No ... I am going to get out soon ... unless you want to join me?”

I smiled and said playfully “and push out all these wonderful bubbles?”

She swept some of the bubbles away with her arm exposing her torso. “Would you like to come in and join me?”

I shook my head. I happen to like baths, especially intimate ones with close girlfriends but I did not fancy a bath with Isabella, so I lied ... “I am more a shower person.”

She moved more of the bubbles off herself uncovering her pelvis and thighs. Isabella persisted “there is room for two.” I did not doubt that and wondered how many others had jumped into the bath with Isabella.

“No. Not today.” I stood up.

“Some other time perhaps?”

“Perhaps.”

“Hand me a towel.” She pointed to a large pink towel folded up on a shelf opposite the bath tub. I stood up, took it, let it fall out of its fold and handed it to her. She started to stand in her bathtub. I felt awkward as she stood dripping soap suds and gleaming of water, barely holding the towel before her. I had already seen her *sans habillement*, but this moment was more intimate, and more sexual.

Isabella stepped out of the bath and onto a pink bath mat. I could not get past her because she now stood between me and the bathroom door. I was trapped and should have seen that coming.

She dried her face and then handed me back her pink towel with the curt command “dry me off?” I took it without saying a word as she turned her back to me. She was the same colour as the towel. So this was her game!

I started to dry her arm. Still I said nothing. Then I dried her shoulder. She turned to face me. I patted her flat chest dry. She turned around and I gathered up the falling drops of water and last remaining soap suds on the top of her back, and her other shoulder and then the middle of her back. I kneeled and dried her backside and the back of her legs.

Then she turned around and I was mere centimeters away from her *source de vie*. I did not want to play her game according to her rules and so I dried her legs and knees then her stomach and then stood and handed her the towel. “I don’t know you that well enough to dry your fancy...”

“My what?”

She knew what I meant, but I obliged her. I pointed to between her legs. “Your intimates.” The tuft of hair over her *source de vie* was wet and gathered together, following the contour of her second pair of lips. Not much was left to my imagination.

“Well ... you are a funny one!” She huffed, spread her legs and started to dry herself so I pushed past her and stepped out of her bathroom.

Isabella was disappointed and while she finished off drying herself I waited for her just outside of her bathroom door.

I had hoped she would perhaps put on a pink robe that hung on the back of the bathroom door, but she merely wrapped herself in her pink towel and when she exited the bathroom she grabbed my hand and pulled me into her bedroom.

I guess she had other plans for us! Again she blocked my exit so I sat at the edge of her bed. She let the towel drop and there sat legs astride on her bed. I looked past her at the mirror and suddenly knew how I might get out of her last ploy. I grabbed for my digital camera. It was in the pocket of my jacket. I got it out and turned it on and pointed it at her.

“Hey!” That got her attention.

“Look behind you,” I said. She looked behind her and smiled.

“Here give me the camera.” She all but grabbed it out of my hand before I said yes and pointed it over her shoulder and took a picture.

It was a perfect picture of her back in the mirror. She also caught part of her shoulder in the forefront of the picture as well. When Isabella handed me back the camera I immediately stood up and walked out of her bedroom.

She didn’t expect me to do this. “Where are you going?” she snapped.

“Into your living room.” I snapped back.

On her coffee table Isabella had already set out an opened bottle of wine and two wine glasses. I sat myself down on a chaise and she sat herself comfortably on a chesterfield. “Will you do the honors?” she asked pointing to the wine and so I poured and we both sat back.



Isabella's back

Her towel barely covered her. Isabella tucked her legs under herself and swirled the wine around in her glass. I did not sip but waited for her to say something ... anything. She was silent and I had nothing to say and so there was an awkward few minutes of silence. I peered morosely down into my glass of wine.

She did not even try to hide her *source de vie* from my view. So that's how it was going to be. I lifted my eyes and took another moment to look around her apartment. Her place was stark and functional. Along with the Danish furniture she had a plain white wicker table with four wicker chairs as her dining table, something you might pick up at a garage sale. I got the sense she was a woman of limited yet practical means. Her kitchen and the rest of her apartment were spotless. Light came streaming in from a sliding door which was ajar just enough to let in a small breeze.

Slowly I looked back at her. It was then that Isabella took a stiff sip of her wine, set her glass down at the edge of the coffee table and finally broke the silence. "Don't you like me?" She flicked her blonde hair back over her shoulder as she asked me this question.

I wish she had not asked me this! I did not know how to answer her so I decided to be flippant. "Would I be sitting here sharing a glass of wine with you", I held the glass up to her, "if I didn't like you?"

"You didn't want to join me in my bath."

I decide to play hard to get. "The water was a bit cold."

"Oh, I see ... well you could have told me and I would have warmed it up." So she was going to push back.

“Men don’t really like baths. I usually have a shower when I get home from work.” The ball was now in her court.

She lobbed right back. She leaned forward. “Well ... let’s have a shower then. I will wash your back.”

I set down my wine glass carefully on the table and leaned forward in my chaise. Time to be direct with Isabella! “What do you really want from me tonight?” The words *really* and *tonight* were spoken with an edge in my voice.

She blinked, a tell of sorts that my directness had gotten to her. She opened the front of her towel. “I thought it was pretty obvious,”

I smirked at her. “I am not that kind of a guy.”

“Oh ... what kind of a guy are you.” Her edge was on the word *kind*. “Are you one of those men who just want to jump right into bed?” She softened the tone of her voice and continued. “If you want we can ...”

“... just jump right into bed.” I shook my head and grinned. “I love women. I love drawing women. I love their company.” That should set her mind to rest. “But ...”

“But what?” She leaned back discouraged.

“But ... I don’t chase after skirts. And I am not into bedlam.” I pronounced the word Bed Lam with a pause between syllables. I hope this would discourage her, but it didn’t.

She laughed at the word *bedlam*. Isabella would not give up too easily. She shed the towel from her shoulders exposing her petite breasts. “Even if they don’t mind being chased.”

“Especially the type or woman that like to be chased. For them it is a game and their first rule is not love, but lust.”

Isabella threw open her towel and leaned back on the chesterfield leaving me little to the imagination. I had drawn her in the Atelier and so I had a sense of her artistry, but she was now splayed out in a bawdy way that was uncomfortable to me. So I got up and ambled over to Isabella and leaned over her planting a kiss on her forehead. “I don’t want to get into your panties.” Before she could wrap her arms around me I was on my way out the door and into the hallway.

She was so desperate to catch me that by the time I had reached the elevator she was in the hallway in hot pursuit of me *sans habillement*. I pressed the elevator button in the hope the elevator was still on this floor and like a miracle from heaven the elevator doors open immediately. I had just enough time to press the lobby button before she dashed into the box.

Isabella pressed against the door open button and me at the same time. “Why are you going? Why are you leaving me? Don’t you like me?”

“Isabella, I don’t mind doing art with you. But sex between us would just be wrong. It would complicate matters.” I was hoping I could be rational with her, but that was wishful thinking.

“No it wouldn’t!” She was frantic. She tried to kiss me but I turned my head away.

“It would be for me.” I put my hand between her breasts and gently pushed her away. “You need to find someone else to share your bed with.”

The elevator alarm bell started to ring. I could see tears gathering in her eyes. Reluctantly she stepped from the elevator and let me go. She stood there hands nearly covering her face, crying as the door started to close.

When the elevator started to descend I let out a long sigh and cursed the fact that I had accepted her invitation to come ‘to dinner.’

It had been a mistake to go visit her at her apartment. The vision of Isabella standing there naked and forlorn was now eternally imprinted in my memory.

The Sad News

If Isabella was plain vanilla, I would soon find out that Emily was pure pistachio. Before I explain this comment, you might want to guess its meaning. I will give you a clue. Pistachios are found in Spumoni ice cream, a mixture of vanilla, chocolate and strawberries, with pistachios thrown in for added measure.

My one and only intimate encounter with Isabella had been a rather torrid and raw. It is quite common that a woman who is prim and proper during the day finds themselves a different animal at night when all inhibitions can be pressed aside. I knew what was on her mind but I could not gratify her. As much as she wanted to be a mother, I would not oblige her.

Life is not just about pleasures. It can't just be about pleasures. There has to be more for life to have true meaning. A man has to be more than a few haploids to be gathered up to make a diploid.

When I got back to my place I had a long hot shower which woke me up. So much for going straight to bed! I snagged a good book and read for a few hours until just before the first light of dawn my brain grew foggy, my eye lids heavy and I set my head down and fell asleep.

I hadn't been asleep for very long before the harsh jangle of the telephone rudely awoke me. My god, it was twelve minutes after five! I could guess who might be calling me this early in the morning. I ignored the ringing and

rolled over only to be jangled a second time. I let the phone ring and then when it stopped I took the receiver off the hook with my foot and rolled back to sleep.

As if the telephoning wasn't enough, there soon was a rapping at my door. I looked at my alarm clock. It was barely six. I got up from my bed and wrapped myself in my robe and opened my front door. I did not bother to invite Isabella in for she pushed past me.

"Why did you rush away last night!" I set out an ever bigger yawn that turned into a grimace. "I needed some sleep."

"We need to talk." She was earnest in her words.

"Can this wait for some other time?" I rubbed my eyes with my hand. I was so exhausted by this ordeal I could barely focus on the fingers before my eyes.

"No it can't". She wasn't going to give any ground.

"Well if we are going to talk you don't mind if I crawl back into bed do you?" I had not intended her to do this but she decided to join me. She started to undress.

"Keep your panties on" I said. "We are not going to have sex!"

She paused for a moment with indecision and then made up her mind. In a flash Isabella was under the covers with me, her small breasts pressing up against me. Isabella rolled over and soon we were two spoons in a cupboard. Before she could strike up a conversation I was fast asleep. Her soft warmth was just the thing I needed to draw me into slumber. It was noon before we both stirred.

When we woke she wanted to try to seduce me again but I had to explain to Isabella the facts of life. “No ... a man can’t please a woman at her beck and call. And I don’t want to make a baby with you.”

The rest of her visit that morning was an acrimonious one and she finally left after I had made her something to eat for brunch. Isabella was so angry at my rejection that she let me be in peace.

A few months later Emily told me that Isabella thought she was pregnant. Emily came right out and asked me and I told her “but not by me!” At first Emily did not believe me but I told her “it is quite impossible because Isabella and I have never had sex!” and left it at that.

And a few weeks after that I heard from Emily that her sister had a miscarriage. This is quite common with women who have a difficult time getting pregnant. My mother once told me that she had seven before she had her first child.

The sad news seemed to have brought the two sisters closer together and I did not hear from them both for several weeks then one day they both appeared at my door at the same time and unannounced.

Gulp! Now what was up I thought. “We have come to draw you,” Isabella said for them both. Warily I let them both in.

And so I sat for both of them at the same time and well, a peace fell across the Atelier that was accentuated by the knowing smile of the two sisters. After they had drawn for nearly two hours I got dressed and made us a large Caesar salad for dinner. They had brought a bottle of white wine which was left in Isabella’s bag. The wine had lost its chill but nonetheless tasted fine with the salad,

It was then that Isabella opened up about her recent misfortune. She cried a bit. I guess I shouldn’t have but asked her if she was going to try again. Emphatically she said no. So I told her about what my mother went through. Emily turned to her sister and placed a hand on hers and smiled. Isabella held back tears. “Don’t give up sis!”

By the time the bottle was finished Isabella had calmed herself down and we three started to talk about art. It was eleven when the two sisters left in each other’s arms.

I went to bed but could not sleep. Perhaps it was the wine?

Adam and Jessi

It was around this time that three new characters appeared at the door of the Atelier. I can only remember the names of two of the three characters. The third person was incidental. I think his name was Bob, or Dick or Harry. I cannot remember how they found out about the Atelier. Perhaps it was by word of mouth? But they were so very different than the artists and models who had visited the Atelier since it opened.

He was Adam, a somewhat bawdy eccentric, with long, unkept hair and a beard to match and she was his amusing muse, Jessi. They arrived one Saturday evening at the Atelier's door, unannounced, with a photographer in tow wanting to use the Atelier as the venue for a rather intimate 'photo-shoot.' My first thought was to say 'no' but I had nothing else planned for the night and so I gave the three of them the run of the Atelier while I sat, and drank coffee and enjoyed the spectacle from the confines of the kitchen.

There was barely enough room for the three visitors. In the clutter of the Atelier, four people were the most we could fit into the place at one time. To make things even more challenging, the photographer had brought two small spot lights and to find them space I had to move some of the art supplies and furniture onto the balcony.

The spot lighting was a harsh titanium blue that gave Adam's beard a fierce coloration, and the black lip stick that Jessi wore a garish tone. But I noticed half way through their 'photoshoot' that the harsh lighting the photographer

had set up served to accentuate the subtle skin tones of the best of Jessi when she had flowered and opened to full bloom, and Adam when his stamen had become heavy with pollen.

I showed Jessi into the bathroom for her to prepare for their photo shoot. I had expected her to exit wearing a costume or robe, but instead she reappeared *sans habillement*. I was in the kitchen when she reappeared. Her bareness took me by surprise. She had placed a hand over her breasts and another over her source to vie. I could see she was anxious and was perspiring worriedly. I think she came to chat with me to reassure herself that she was not going to be left to her own devices in a room with three men. I smiled and asked her if she wanted something to drink? She shook her head.

“I have never done this before,” she whispered under her breath.

“Neither have I,” I whispered back.

She looked at me with a puzzled expression on her face. “But you aren’t starkers!” she responded.

“I sit as an artist’s model from time to time.” I whispered this to her as if we were in the midst of our own private conspiracy.

“Naked!” she asked. I nodded “most time for women artists. They enjoy the dichotomy of the human condition.”

“Oh!” Her eyes flashed with amusement. Her breasts took on a crimson hue. I tilted my head and noticed Jessi had an interesting tattoo on her right hip that almost sparkled in the light. She pivoted her hip to let me take a closer look at her tattoo. As she did this goose bumps appeared on her skin.

“You are very beautiful,” I whispered to her. She let me glance down her backside and leg. Jessi did not have an ounce of fat anywhere on her body.

I looked up into her eyes and smiled. “How old are you?” I asked.

“Old enough ...” she responded. When she said this I wondered. She removed the hand from across her breasts and adjusted her hair. It was an involuntary response to my question. “Don’t you know, you should never ask a woman her age.” Her breasts were petite, just like her.

“I am going to sit in the kitchen drinking coffee. If for any reason you feel uncomfortable ask them to stop and come have coffee with me in the kitchen.”

She beamed. At that moment I saw her as a small kitten going to play in an alley cat’s world.

I leaned forward and whispered into her ear. “You don’t have to do this if you don’t want to.” I was so close I could feel the heat of her face against mine. She smelled of lavender. “I think they would understand if you changed your mind.”

She placed a finger on my lips. “Shh ...” she whispered back. “If you say anything else I might change my mind.”

She turned and I watched as she ambled into the Atelier where the two hungry alley cats waited for her. I admired the gracefulness of Jessi’s almost feline steps and wondered what prompted her to agree to be the plaything for them?

Jessi’s arrival into their presence brought a flood of praise from the photographer, but complete silence from Adam. Adam measured her up as a hungry alley cat might size up a meal. This thought sent a shiver down my spine. I knew then and there he had not had her before. She leaned against his shoulder touching her bare skin against his and looked over her shoulder back at me. Her face was calm which reassured me that she would be fine.

I watched for a minute or two as the three of them set themselves up. She was petite, soft and svelte. Adam was a head taller than Jessi, and twice as heavy. He was a hairy beast. In his state of arousal he was huge and wanted to thrust himself upon her. The way she responded to him I could tell that Jessi was in no hurry and wanted to be kissed and cuddled. She wanted intimacy and expressive fore play. In her own cunning way she was going to toy with him.

The two of them was so different. It was the dichotomy of the human condition playing out. The complementary roles dictated by the complementary parts. And there was also the photographer, so out of place as to be a voyeur or peeping Tom.



Adam and Jessi

I watched with a mixed sense of amusement and apprehension. For a minute or two Adam impelled, but Jessi pushed gently but firmly back. It frustrated Adam who got heavier and heavier in his anticipation. He was a mammoth and he was ready to force himself on her. If things got out of hand I wondered if Jessi would scream out and I would have to force apart the two of them. But that never happened. It was the gentleness of Jessi that won out.

The photographer waited until she was being kissed and cuddled before he lifted the camera to his eye and started to take his pictures.

I stepped into the kitchen and put the kettle on the stove. With a few quick snaps their session began and for the better part of 45 minutes all that could be heard was the occasional instruction ‘turn this way ... turn that way,’ and

the incessant click of the digital camera. I made my coffee and sat on a chair and started to read a book of short stories by Fitzgerald.



The Dichotomy of the Genders

It was like listening to the track of a burlesque film, but without the garish music. Adam was completely silent. Jessi was not, sharing those pleasurable sounds that only intimacy with an aroused woman could engender.

I found it hard to concentrate. Ever fifteen minutes or so I would set down the book, get up and spend a few seconds watching the photo shoot. Somehow Jessi would know I was checking in and she would slowly turn her head and smile to me.

It did not take me long for me to notice how different the two were. Adam seemed somewhere else, almost as if he was stoned. Jessi was there, in the place and in the moment. The two of them were making love, but not in an honest and intimate way. It was all theatrics. She was playing with him while she enjoyed herself. He was not happy. She was slow to plateau and he was being teased beyond his endurance. She knew when he was near and would literally step back to rob him of his paroxysm. He was almost convulsing with frustration.

The third time I stepped in to the Atelier Adam was a stallion to his mare. Jessi looked up at me. Her eyes were tired. Jessi looked over her shoulder at Adam and said. "I need to take a break." He didn't stop. Instead he drove himself fro and to with more fury when she said this. So she had to push him back with her rump and then stood with her back to him.

This was too much for Adam and he had his paroxysm all over her backside. Without looking over her shoulder, Jessi wiggled her backside back and forth and giggled. When he was finished Adam just stood there transfixed, almost paralyzed. Then he slowly fell in a pile onto the floor burying his face in his hands.

While this little drama was going on the photographer snapped pictures as fast as humanly possible.

Jessi stepped into the bathroom. A minute or two later she joined me in the kitchen.

She stood naked before me. “Would you like some coffee Jessi?” I asked and she beamed affectionately. I turned my back to her to give her some privacy, opened up a cupboard and reached for a coffee cup and saucer.

As I reached for the cup she stepped forward and gave me a hug. I stopped for a second and asked her “are you ok?” She did not say a word. She only sighed and hugged me tighter. I wrapped my free hand behind me and placed it on her shoulder blade. I had expected her body to be warm to the touch but instead she was cold.

She stepped back from me. “Make it strong,” she said. The kettle was just boiled and so I made her some instant coffee. I put in an extra half scoop.

As I stirred in the instant coffee I did not turn but asked quietly, “how are you holding up?”

“I am tired ... this was not what I expected.” I turned and handed her the coffee. She took it and took a sip then continued. “Adam asked me to sit for some pictures, not to be his play thing.”

I leaned close to her and whispered into her ear. “Why didn’t you just say no then?”

She moved her head a bit back and looking into my eyes responded. “Isn’t it obvious?”

It suddenly became clear to me what she had been doing for the past forty five minutes. “You have been playing with him haven’t you?”

She had a huge smile on her face as she nodded.

“Why don’t you call it an evening then?”

“I think I will ... Do you have a robe or something I can put on?”

“Yes let me get it. You are cold ... would you like me to pour you a bath?”

She nodded, I brought her a robe. It was much too big for her and when she put it on she seemed so much tinier and fragile than she really was. Then I went back into the bathroom and started a bath. She followed me in and I gave her a face cloth, a large towel and a new bar of soap.

“Can you tell them?” She said. I nodded, knowing full well that it should be obvious to them that the ‘photoshoot’ was now over.

“You might want to lock the door.” I stepped out of the bathroom and paused as the door was locked. I stepped into the main room of the Atelier. The air was hot, humid with perspiration and heavy with musk.

Adam just stood there like a sleeping woolly mammoth with his trunk swaying in the breeze.

“What’s going on?” the photographer asked. He had already turned off his two spot lights and had been reviewing his digital images.

“Jessi is tired. She is taking a bath. She wants to call it a night.” I spoke firmly.

The photographer was annoyed. “We have only being doing our shoot for an hour!” He zipped past me before I could stop him. “Maybe she will let me take some more pictures of her?” He was knocking at the bathroom door. “Jessi ...” No answer. He knocked a second time more frantically. “Let me take some pictures of you in the bath.” Still no answer.

I could hear the water was still on. “Maybe she can’t hear you?” I said. The water was turned off. The photographer looked up at me. “Or maybe she just wants to be left alone.” I frowned at him.

The photographer knocked a third time. He tried the door handle. From inside the bathroom came Jessi’s voice “You’ve gotten your pictures! Leave me alone!”

Adam was already hurriedly putting on his clothes. He turned to me and barked “tell Jessi I am leaving.” Then scowling past me he growled “Let’s get out of here.” The photographer quickly gathered up his things and within two minutes they both were out the door.

As I shut the door to the Atelier I could hear Jessi ask “are they gone?”

I stopped outside the bathroom door and answered “yes ... they have both left.”

“Good ...” I heard Jessi step put from the bath and unlock the bathroom door. I took this to be an invitation to step in to join her so I did. There she was sitting with her back to me at the edge of the bath tub.

She gave out a long sigh. At that moment I felt sorry for Jessi. “Take your time and have a nice long bath.”

“Thanks ... Now that they are gone I am starting to feel better.” After a few seconds she turned her head and looked up at me. Her eyes were sad and hollow. “I should never have done this!” I did not know what to say so I stayed silent and leaned against the door frame

“Aren’t you going to say something?”

I smiled and softly said “you can stay as long as you like.” She probably wanted me to be judgmental but nothing I could say could change the last hour of her life. I knew that anything I said would probably ring hollow.

Jessi stood and leaned forward, pausing for a split second to reach over and steady herself with a hand on the far wall. As she did this I saw that her sex was raw and crimson. Then sat herself back down in the bath tub. Once she was settled in she handed me the face cloth and soap. “Wash my back.”

I set a towel onto the wet floor and kneeled next to her and took the dry face cloth and immersed it into the water. She had poured herself very hot water. “Would you like some Epsom salt?”

“That would be nice.” Next to the bath was a container with Epsom salt. I opened it and poured in a good handful near her feet.

“That’s enough” she said. Jessi leaned forward and swirled the water between her legs about to dissolve the Epsom salt. “That’s feels so good.”

“Epsom salt has both magnesium ions and sulphate ions ... they help our skin feel better.” I suddenly thought how silly it was for me to babble on about magnesium and sulphate ions and the like but having seen how raw she was I felt paternal in my feeling towards her.

She placed her hand between her legs, rubbed her sex and closed her eyes. “It does feel good.” She sighed as she said the words. I watched her fingers caress herself, then press further and further around herself.

I started to stir. “Maybe I should give you some privacy?” I began to stand. “No please stay ...” so I did stay and washed her back.

Jessi didn’t open her eyes but continued to fondle her source de vie. Her hand was wide open. The soft crimson folds of her skin rose from between her fingers. She took care to caress the petals of her sex and not the recess within.

With every passing second her breath became more aroused. Here was the pleasure that had earlier that evening been denied her.

She turned to me without opening her eyes and whispered “kiss me.” I kissed her lightly on her cheek.

“On my lips ...” I kissed her on her lips. The instant my lips touched hers she shook with her paroxysm.

Then Jessi pressed her lips passionately onto mine and began to cry.

An Italian Evening

I like doing new and exciting things. Not all people are like that, but I am. I particularly enjoy doing things that are creative and artistic. That is why I enjoy writing so much, and also drawing and on occasion painting, when I feel inspired, or have the energy (for being creative and artistic requires a great deal of mental energy) and of course when I have the spare time. But I rarely have spare time ...

I sometimes sit as an artist's model outside of the Atelier, but only when people ask me to sit for them on special occasions. Forced to some degree by my personal circumstances, and by the fact I live in one of the most expensive cities in North America, Vancouver, I live an active and productive life. The people in *Lalaland* (what Vancouver is described as in some circles) are very individualistic and narcissistic and well, half the time, half of them are high on one addiction or another ... well you get the drift.

Me, I am high on life itself. I never touch the stuff ... There is nothing better for your body than endorphins, the endogenous morphine that we ourselves produce when we live a happy and wonderful life. I do creative and artistic things partly because it is a compulsion, and partly for the endorphin high these fun things bring me. Besides, we have only one life to live and it should be lived to its fullest. My circumstances are that I live in chronic pain, and life has taught me the best and ultimately only way to overcome chronic pain is with constant pleasure. Every day when I get up out of bed in the morning I think of all the fun and pleasurable things I will do that day and this helps to

get me started. That and my one and only daily cup of coffee. Every day for me is an adventure. I also search for fun things to do.

Recently I came across an ad on an internet bulletin board for an artist's model, which was a curious sort of ad because the sitting was for a private party and the duration was only an hour. Usually such calls are for studio work and for session of between two or three hours. Being an experienced artist model I was curious and so I answered the call.

As it would turn out a thirty-some Vancouver couple were having an Italian theme supper and wanted someone to sit for an hour after dinner so that they and their four guests could do some drawing, in the Renaissance style. The husband was organizing this as a surprise for his artistic wife who was now burdened with a baby and domestic life. When he told me this, I agreed to sit that evening and even suggested that I could be Michel Angelo's David if they had something I could stand on.

And so, a Thursday evening in mid-March I was on my way across town to be an artistic fancy. A fancy is a caprice or whim. It is imagination and imagery. I thought this sitting to be both mysterious and exciting at the same time. In the inside I felt different than if I were just another model for just another life drawing class. This evening's caprice would be something totally different. It would be some artistic fun.

I arrived about a half-hour early for the 8 pm sitting and so I walked up the street and back, passing a nice little fashion house tucked away on a side street.

Since I am wanting to start a fashion line in the style of Coco Chanel (simple designs made in white and black) I logged away the locale. Vancouver, despite its silliness, is at the cusp of becoming a truly Cosmopolitan city. The one thing that will help this city become Cosmos is a better fashion sense. Lulu lemon gym wear just doesn't cut it, especially one holding in the bulges of the indulgences that Lalaland seems so bountiful of. And we have endured enough of the camel toes ...

The women in Vancouver are strange creatures. They want to be noticed, but don't want to be acknowledged, unless they are the ones doing the acknowledging. That's tough on the rest of the world. It's a mix of indulgence and entitlements.

That thought ... indulgence and entitlements ... crossed my mind just as I walked to the front door of the simple old style three story apartment building. I buzzed the appropriate apartment at exactly 8 as arranged and Robert (not his real name) answered and said he would be right down to let me in. A moment later he appeared. Robert was wearing a lovely Sinatra style hat and greeted me warmly. As we walked up to his second floor apartment he quickly explained what was up. Nervously, he said he had told his wife and four guests to expect "a surprise for an after dinner treat." I smiled warmly, hoping this would give him some needed courage.

When we arrived at the door of his apartment he hesitated, put a finger to his lips and quietly said "I will let you into the bathroom to the left to let you

change.” I nodded and whispered “it will take me two minutes to change into a loin cloth and robe” then we were in.

The small lobby to his apartment was empty. There was a small kitchen to the right and the bathroom to the left. I ducked into it and locked the door behind me. The bathroom was full of practical familial things. It was small and I had brought a shoulder bag with a robe and a loin cloth. The bag was big enough to store my things while I sat as the model.

It took me about two minutes before I was ready and right on queue there was a knock on the door. I hadn’t yet put on my robe and opened the door expecting Robert, but in fact there in front of me was standing a tall woman with long blonde hair wearing a blue and white close fitting dress.

She smiled at me. “I was just checking ...”

“What?”

“Robert said he had arranged a model ... I was just making sure you were male.” When she said male she looked down at my loin cloth. As she did this I could see her irises grow wide and her bosom become more pronounced.

“I usually start a drawing session with the loin cloth on ...” I said to her, “and then let the artists decide when I should take it off.” She smiled when I said “take it off.”

She leaned forward and whispered into my ear. “I do hope you take it off ...”

I started to remove the loin cloth for her when she stopped me with her hand and whispered “not now ... but later.” I had already flopped out and her hand was a finger’s width away from the best of me. She blushed.

In the background I heard Robert say “Satisfied honey?” She looked up at me and smiled.

I tucked myself back into the loin cloth and whispered back to her ...”I will take it off during the second set.”

I looked deep into her eyes as she said “Coming dear ...” I quickly grabbed and put on my robe and tied it in the front. She waited for me and then I followed her through the kitchen and into the living room.

I had not felt this near the door, but the apartment air was hot and heavy. There were Robert and his four guests sitting passively on a couch and two chairs. The drapes were drawn and so you could not see out onto the balcony, and the neighbors across the street could not see in either. That was fine by me, for while I did not mind an artistic audience I did mind voyeurs.

My arrival was met with some *ahhhs* from the guests, and so Robert stood up and introduced me and said that they would be *doing art* for the next hour. That was my queue to step up onto a small pale blue ottoman that would serve as my pedestal.

I took off the robe and stood up on the pedestal. I registered the looks of disappointment in the faces of the two women when they saw that I was wearing a loin cloth. While Robert got them started on the first of four sets, a two minute warm up sketch, his wife retired to the kitchen to tidy up after the dinner.

On the folding doors to the closet opposite the kitchen were full length mirrors and as I stood there for the first set I could see that the wife was looking up at me every dozen or so seconds, and with each glance her eyes were taking more of me in for longer.

At the end of the first set Robert called for his wife “leave that and come and do some drawing.” I looked up at her and saw that her face had grown a deep red. She looked up at me and said “In a minute dear.

For the second set, a five minute pose, I turned around and then said “does anyone object if I ditch the loin cloth ...” Behind me again there was some *ahhhs* from the guests, and a female voice said, “this will be fun.”

And so began the second pose, with me standing with my back to the five artists and with me stretching my right leg back and bending the other knee in a tension pose that is popular with sculptors. Out of the corner of my right eye I could see the table being cleared in the dining room of the dinner dishes. I turned my head and saw that as she came to the far side of the dinner table she glanced up at me for an instance, which in my pose was enough for her to

see the best of me hanging clear of my body. I winked at her and noticed she saw my wink. Then she went back to what she was doing. The five minute pose took forever to complete.

Then I leaned down and picked up my robe, placed it in front of my body and turned to face the five artists, and the wife who was now standing there at the edge of the kitchen. “Do you want me covered, or uncovered?”

There was a straw vote, the two men saying *covered* while the two women artists saying *uncovered*. Who was going to break the tie? Then Robert looked over his shoulder at his wife and smiled. He said nothing. She said “... *uncovered*.” She then turned away and went back into the kitchen.

And so I drew the robe over my left shoulder and took up the pose of Michel Angelo’s David for the third set, a twenty minute drawing session, turning my head to face in the direction of the mirror in the closet. The five other artists got down to drawing me. From within the kitchen I could see she was watching me as I stood there.

Out of the corner of my eye I could see the five artists at their pencils. Robert was clearly tracing out my contour. The man sitting next to him was drawing big circles and his date sitting next to him was drawing my face, while at least she was trying to draw my face but I sensed she was a tad distracted. Sitting next to her was the other fellow who was obviously not into the whole drawing thing ... and sitting by herself in a chair at the far end of the living room was

a heavy set woman wearing a pink baseball cap and pink jersey and she seemed to be getting into the spirit of the evening.

I stood silently listening to the scratching of the pencils. Then the distracted woman asked me “do you do this often?”

“Do what?” I queried.

“Stand naked in front of total strangers?” Her comment elicited a laugh from the guests.

I toyed with her. “When you sit as an artist’s model *vous etes un objet d’art et pas juste un nus*”

“Huh ...” She obviously did not speak French.

“When you sit as an artist’s model ... *you are an art object, and not just a nude.*”

“And how do you feel?” She was indeed curious.

I smiled and tossed back to her the comment “you should try it sometime.”

Her date turned to her and smiled and she turned to him and giggled. “Don’t you wish!”

I continued, “it is enjoyable to bring happiness to artists.” As I said this the woman in the kitchen’s head shot up and she stared at me earnestly. Then she set down the kitchen cloth she had in her hand and entered the living room, standing behind her husband as he drew. Alternately she looked down at his artwork and up at me. I could see she was very aroused.

I tried not to reciprocate in my arousal and had to close my eyes and think of grey cold concrete to keep myself from becoming erect. There is nothing more embarrassing for a male artist model then to have the full splendor of his arousal.

I was partly successful and was only saved the full embarrassment by the fact the twenty minute pose was up. Gladly I sat down for the final pose, as Rodin’s Thinker. With this set she joined her husband and her guests for the final twenty minute sketch. She pulled up a chair and sat next to me as her husband gave her a pencil and a sketch pad. Then we started.

I now sat turned towards the woman in the room. It just turned out that way, nothing more. I kept my legs together just enough that the best of me was propped up onto the inside of my thighs. I had my right fist up against my forehead and was looking down at the best of me. While four people in the room saw my contour, two saw my masculinity.

Out of the corner of my eye I could see her sketching me. Her husband then said, “let this last drawing be one where you do not pick up your pencil off

the page as you draw.” She turned to him and said “this will be hard,” but he insisted.

She turned back to me and continued on with her sketch. She was sketching my masculinity by drawing parallel lines varying the distance between each line to provide a cylindrical shape. Then she started to draw the tip of me, scrolling ever so gently back and forth. I swear I could feel the motion of her pencil being mirrored across the realness of me. I was aroused and started to drip ...

Then she drew the line up my thigh, down along the outside of one leg, around the knee and back then started up the torso to my shoulder. Her pencil was moving frantically across the page as she filled my volume with significant lines. Then she did my shoulders and head, my fist and arm and then down the other side of me with a confidence that was almost frightening.

She did not lift her pencil once as she continued to fill the page with the sheer volume of me. By now Robert has stop drawing and was watching her intently. It was as if she was devouring me with the tip of her pencil. The others continued on oblivious of the little drama that was playing out in front of them.

“This is fun!” she said as she neared the completion of her drawing. I was amazed at her work of art. She was evidently an artist in her own right, perhaps the only real artist in the room. I felt warm inside and I throbbed, for it became evident that from her vantage point she had been staring down over

my thigh and at the best of me as she was drawing. In fact she had the best view in the house.

Then he husband said “time’s up!” Startled she looked up at him and asked “can we do another drawing?”

“Maybe some other time. Time’s up. We had only agreed on an hour.”

I grabbed my robe and drew it across me as I stood and then awkwardly put the robe on and said “I will go get dressed.”

Robert then said, “let us thank our model” and the guests began to clap. I smiled and said “I had the easy part, you had the hard part.” As I said ‘hard part’ I noticed a smirk on the wife’s face. The double entendre had not escaped her. She looked up at me then turned her back and went back into the kitchen. Robert was too busy chatting about the drawings with his guests to have noticed the smirk.

I made my way to the bathroom and stopped for a second near the kitchen. The wife was sitting back on the countertop her arms steadying herself on both sides. “Are you ok?” I asked her.

She looked up and nodded her head emphatically. I took a short step into the room and saw that the front of her dress with wet with her arousal. I took another step to her and as I did this I drew open my robe. She looked down and realized that she was not alone in her arousal. She lifted her skirt up to

her hips and then drew off her panties. The tuft of hair between her thighs was soaked through. “I came ...” she whispered. “This has never happened before.” She kissed me on the cheek and gave me her panties. “I want to see you again.”

She said this looking past me at the mirror at the end of the kitchen. Her husband still had his back turned to us. I did up my robe and leaned forward and whispered my email address into her ear. Then I turned and went into the bathroom. I was throbbing. It was crazy what we had just done, but no one was the wiser.

It took me a few minutes to calm down and dress and when I opened the door there was Robert waiting to pay me for my sitting. His wife reappeared from their bedroom wearing a new dress. She looked up at her husband and said nonchalantly “I spilled something on my dress.”

I smiled knowingly. Then Robert asked me about the added cost of getting to their place. “Five bucks I said ...” She looked up at me and with a twinkle in her eyes said “give him an extra twenty.”

“I don’t mind the five bucks ... but if you want to throw away money ...” She pulled another twenty from her husband’s wallet and handed it to me.

Just as she did this the women who sat opposite me walked past me to the bathroom. “Thanks for sitting for us,” she sang gleefully. “It was wonderful.”

“Yes ... it was wonderful,” the wife said “perhaps you shall come sit for us again sometime?” I nodded and she turned and walked through the kitchen back to the living room.

As I left I wondered about so many things. And sure enough a few days later I got a nice little email from her. Her name was Serena and she wanted so much to see me and do some art together.

I said yes.

What else could an artist model do for an aspiring artist but say yes ... but that is a story for another day!

She Should Take You as Her Lover

One of the oddest encounters in the first few years of the Atelier was with two Chinese women, both friends, who dropped in one weekday afternoon ‘to do art.’ There were both married and had children in elementary school. They both had husbands who worked hard and provided for their family’s needs but were no longer amorous towards their wives. Their husbands worked abroad most of the time. The women were trophy wives who were trapped in that slow decline in beauty and in purpose that can rob a woman of their self-esteem. The two were in the grips of a mid-life crisis

They were both dreadfully bored with the day to day tedium of their lives. Perhaps it was the tedium most of all that brought them to the Atelier. They were looking at themselves, trying to rediscover that lost moment in time that preceded the hubby, the house, the home and the children. One of the two had managed to keep her figure by dieting and exercise, while the other was growing plump with her indulgences and listless lifestyle. They both wore designer clothes. The thinner was a fashionista, while the other one wore tight fitting black outfits.

I happen upon them one afternoon while I was sitting at a bench at a park, sketching the landscape. They happen to be walking by, enjoying their conversation in Mandarin when the plumper of the two asked me whether I was an artist. I said I liked to draw and left it at that. That was enough for them to sit next to me on the bench and start a conversation that went on for a

short period of time in the park and for a longer period of time over coffee outside a coffee shop a block and a half over from where we first met.

They wanted to see the other drawings in the sketch book. As we flipped through the pages they came across some figurative sketches that Emily and Isabella had made of me in the Atelier. The two women exchanged some words in Mandarin then the fashionista asked me about the drawings, so I told them about the Atelier.

I thought that she was just being polite but she was earnestly interested in drawing. “I studied landscape architecture at school back home in China. It would be fun to do some figurative drawing. I have never drawn the human figure.”

It was the eagerness in her friends eyes that bought me to the challenge and so I said “sure ... whenever you want you can come visit the Atelier.” I took out a piece of paper out of my pocket and started to write my contact particulars when the fashionista said “what about doing some drawing this morning? I can drive us there right now.”

“It is short notice to get a model.” I meekly tried to dissuade them.

It was the plump one who pointed at one of the figurative drawings and said “why don’t you be our model?”

I went silent for a moment. The fashionista looked at me with her pleading expressive eyes. “I have always wanted to draw figurative sketches.”

I looked at the two women and thought what harm would there be. They both are married. They both know the facts of life. I would be safer with them than I had been with the intrigues of Emily and Isabella. I nodded. So we finished our coffee and the three of us drove up to the Atelier.

I set the two women up with sketch pads and drawings pencils then I went into the bathroom to disrobe. Still I felt the need to be modest and so I put on a loin cloth and when I re-entered the Atelier the two women looked hungrily at me. I could tell they wanted me in the raw so I said ‘the loin cloth might come off in a little while.’

I stood up on the pedestal and we started a drawing session. The fashionista took to drawing like a fish takes to water. She understood the rudiments of sketching, but her friend was a fish out of water and took to drawing stickmen. The plump one asked her something in Mandarin and so the fashionista set down her pencil and started to explain the basic concepts of drawing to her friend.

I looked down from the pedestal and waited for the two women to return to drawing me. When they did I decided I would help the two of them out. “There are many different ways to approach life drawing.”

The two women stopped their drawing and peered up at me.

“One way is to start with the pelvis. You figure where the pelvis is and what it is doing. Here is the top of my pelvis.” I placed my hands on my hips. “the pelvis is shaped like a butterfly ...” I placed my hands in front of my pelvis, slanted downwards and inwards. “A man and a woman’s pelvis have a different shape. Why is the pelvis different in shape?”

The fashionista said it was because woman ‘have babies.’ She almost giggled as she said this.

“That’s right. It is because women have babies and your babies need to have a passageway to enter the world safely. Let me explain this by using your hands. Hold your hands side by side with palms up. “

The two women put their pencils down and they both held their hands down in front of themselves.

“Look at the shape before you. It looks like a human pelvis.”

They nodded.

“Now roll your two hands slightly pivoting at one side on the palm of your hand and the other side on the tips of your two little pinky fingers. When you do this you change the overall structure before you and you open a crevice at the bottom of your handsome pelvis. This small crevice is where the end of our gastrointestinal system would be.”

The plump one giggled.

I continued. “But a woman has to be able to birth a child and so they need a bigger gap at the base of the pelvis. How to get this? Now roll your two hands slightly more, pivoting at one side on the palm of your hand and the other side on the tips of your three fingers. What has happened?”

They looked down within their hands. “Oh!” the plump one said.

I continued. “You have not only a larger crevice but the crest of the pelvis has lowered and rolled inwards.”

They both looked up at me in amusement.

“This is what eons of evolution has provided for the human female. If your birth canal is too small, your baby could not enter the world, and in an era before modern medicine and Caesarean sections (C-sections) both mother and baby would perish.”

There was a moment of silence then the fashionista spoke first. “I delivered my two daughters naturally.” The plump one said “mine were delivered by Caesarean sections.”

“Well, what is attached to the pelvis.” I placed two fingers just beneath my belly button. Then I drew my fingers up the mid-line of my body. “The next

structure you need to place is the human spine. It expresses the action line of the figure.”

I spent a few minutes explaining how the movement of the model can be easily presented by the single line of the spinal column. The two women watched me as I bent and twisted and moved about expressing different gestural poses, showing them in turn the shape of my spine.

“I am going to take up some short poses and I want you just to draw the shape of my pelvis and my spine.” And so for about five poses each of a minute in duration and they drew me as stickmen, without the head, arms and legs.

It was time to move on. “What is attached to the spine?”

“The head,” said the fashionista.

“Yes, we’ll get to the head in a moment ... anything else?” I asked looking at her friend.

“The body ...” she said pointing at my torso.

“Yes, the rest of the body or torso.” I stood up straight on the pedestal. “One of the big differences between a man and a woman is that the male torso is rectangular, while the female torso has a more complicated shape.” I drew out a female shape with my hands. “And so a male torso is much easier to draw than a female one.” With my finger I drew out the rectangle that was

my torso. “Shoulder to shoulder, down to one side of the pelvis and then to the other side.”

Then I stepped off the pedestal and drew out the shape of my rib cage for them and next invited the two women, each in turn, to draw out the arch of the bottom of my rib cage with a finger. The plump one eagerly went first. She pressed her nail into me and left a red welt. The fashionista was less forceful and her finger tickled me.

“And what is another prominent difference between the male and the female torso?” I cupped my hands over my breasts as I asked them that.

“Women have boobs,” the plump one spouted.

“Men have breasts but most women have more pronounced breasts.”

“Men don’t have breasts!” the fashionista announced.

“But we do!” I said. “Come ...” I beckoned her up and she stood. Then I took her hand and placed it over my left breast. “Can you feel the fatty tissue?”

She felt around and had a look of surprise on her face. The plump one stood and placed her hand on my right breast, and smiled warmly.

“If for a few weeks you gave me the female hormone estrogen my breasts would fill with fat and well ... then there would be no doubt that I have breasts.” I smiled when I said this. “In fact, for some men as they age and their testosterone levels drop their breasts start to fatten up. For a *castrati* it is the same thing.”

“A castrati?” the plump one inquired.

“A castrati is a man who has had an orchidectomy ...” I deliberately used the medical term to illicit what came next.

“A what?” the plump one asked.

“One of the Latin words for testicles is orchids.”

Still she did not understand so the fashionista said something in Mandarin and the plump one said “ohhhh” and began to giggle hysterically. She was staring at my loin cloth as she giggled. Then an impish smirk came across her face and she tugged on my loin cloth and well ... I didn’t stop her.

There I now stood, bare to the skin right in front of the two Chinese women as they chattered excitedly to each other in Mandarin. I didn’t move but let them have their fun.

“You’re big,” the plump one said.

“Am I?” I looked down and was surprised to hear her say that.

“Bigger than my husband,” she said firmly. I smiled.

The fashionista just stared at me, as if in a trance. She had a distant look on her face. I wondered what she was thinking, but didn’t want to ask her. If I did I knew this would break her out of her trance. I let her be.

When she finally spoke she said “you are very beautiful.” I had not expected that from her either.

“Am I?” I said softly. I could feel myself stir, as if their stares were pumping me full of sexual energy. The two women went silent as they watched me come alive. I imagined the two women were themselves bare in front of me and this helped me stir even faster. In the matter of less than a minute I was an orchid in full bloom. At that point I backed up slowly and then stepped up on the pedestal, never turning my back on them as I did.

The fashionista picked up her sketch pad and pencil and then stopped. “You are only the second man I have ever seen naked.” We could assume the only other one was her husband. Sure enough ... “I met my husband in high school ... and we were married when we both finished university.”

The plump one turned to her and asked “didn’t you have other boy friends at school.” The fashionista shook her head. “Only one.”

“I had several boyfriends ...” the plump one proudly admitted. The fashionista turned to her and asked her something in Mandarin. The plump one nodded and smiled. I think I knew what she had been asked ...”were they your lovers?” for the fashionista’s face suddenly went crimson, while the plump one had the smile of a Cheshire cat.

While the two of them were exchanging their intimacies, I sat down on the pedestal and took up a classical pose that allowed the two of them to admire the fullness of my masculine form. For the next few minutes the two of them drew, then the plump one said something to her friend In Mandarin and the fashionista sudden stopped sketching and stared at her friend aghast.

I was intrigued so I asked. “What did she say?” The fashionista said nothing, so after a good fifteen seconds the plump one piped up “I said she should take you as her lover.” Then there was silence.

The plump one went back to her drawing. In the face of the fashionista I could sense a measure of nervousness.

And I did not say a thing, but leaned even further forward, giving them less of a fore shortening. When the plump one was looking down at her drawing and the fashionista was looking at me I winked at her and smiled invitingly.

Her nervousness melted away and she winked and smiled warmly back.

Pas a Deux

(**A *pas a deux* is French for a dance between two partners.)

We like to see our species as so much better and so more superior than other creatures, but humans are mammals and we share much more with other mammals than perhaps we might first admit. I was reminded about this just a few years ago. Near where I reside is a stable and riding paddock. It happened to be deep within an urban park that had a creek running through it. I had seen horses on the public paths in the park and could not help but admire both the horses and their mounts.

There was a rider and her stallion that I had watched gallop by on several occasions. Both the horse and its rider were magnificent. But on these brief occasions she and I had never exchanged more than a glance. The grand stallion itself had taken no notice of me.

I happen to be walking by the stables one morning when she was washing down her mount after an early ride. It was a calm and quiet, and rather hot Sunday August morning. The sun was burning in rays through the canopy of the tall Douglas fir trees of the forest.

Her horse was a large grey stallion, perhaps middle age as horses go. She was a tall Amazonian, almost as tall as her mount. He was tied to a stake in the center of the paddock. She stood on the far side of her mount from me. I could see that she had a bucket of soapy water at her feet and a coarse brush

in her hand. The top of the stallion gleamed with her handy work. She was now taking to his underside.

I happen to be walking by the paddock on the public path way through the park and so I stopped to watch them both. I had seen the two of them ride past me on the two previous Sunday mornings here in Park. Today I was given a chance to watch them both together sharing a cherished moment, the mistress and her mount, after their riding session. As I watched a strange feeling came over me. I felt almost as an interloper, a voyeur intruding on an intimate moment between them both.

I took out my sketch book from my satchel and started to draw the horse. Anyone who has tried to draw horses know that it is an acquired skill and within a few minutes it was evident that I needed more practice, so I put away my sketchbook and left the equestrian drawing for another day.

She did not see me for several minutes, or perhaps just decided to ignore me as I stood up against the wooden fence. She just continued to stroke his underside, from the front of his belly to the middle of his stomach. If she had seen me perhaps she would have paused and not continued to do what she was doing. Or perhaps she would have just ignored me.

I swear that as I watched her stroke his belly a tingle went across my belly as well. By brushing his underside the stallion was becoming agitated. You could tell by the way his hooves were dragged through the ground. As the coarse brush came closer to his sex he started to pull against the rope that tied

him to the stake at the center of the paddock. He snorted, but she flouted him and continued. I swear, as I watched her every one of her brush stroke I felt as a phantom caress across my midriff.

The stallion's agitation was carried across the paddock and from within the stable beyond I could hear a pair of hoofs kick the wooden walls. The stallion turned its head towards the stable. At the time I thought nothing of it.

When his mistress brushed the underside of his marble purse the horse glared over at her. But again she did not stop and he began to step his hind legs back and forth, back and forth. He snorted again, this time with a groaning sort of a grunt.

There was another frantic kick at the wall of the stable. I smiled then let out a near silent chuckle. The stallion heard me and suddenly reared its head towards me and eyed me with his evil eye. He flared his teeth at me and I pushed back from the fence and grimaced back at him. It was as if he was pleading for me to get his mistress to stop. But I wasn't going to do that for him. I stood where I was. I guess I could have said hello or something like that to get her to stop, but something deep within me told me to let things be.

And so I stayed silent.

The stallion let out another snort and lowered his head and looked down between his four legs at himself. Still she continued with the coarse brush. It

was then that I realized why the stallion was pleading, for he had become unsheathed and the soft pinkness of him was starting to steal into view.

Still his mistress did not stop. Instead she continued with the coarse brush, but now with a slower and more careful stroke along the best of him.

As I stood there watching her tease her mount my midriff was warm and I too began to feel a warmness in my loins, as if she was teasing me as well.

She was now also stroking his belly back and forth with her bare, free hand. This was turning out to be much too much for the poor stallion who had now become completely unsheathed and a bit unhinged.

He snorted. If it wanted to I am quite sure that the stallion could have easily pushed her away yet he didn't.

It was then when she noticed me. She looked up at me between the horse's four legs and said 'Oh ... hello. Been standing there long?.' I wave to her and shook my head. The horse slowly turned its head and looked over at me a second time. The splendor of the stallion even shocked me for he was now twice the measure of what a neophyte to the scene would have expected.

I was speechless. There was an awkwardness to the moment that held me back from speaking. I knew if I said something that the cracking of my voice would have betrayed my nervous agitation, so I said nothing. She went back to teasing him. His splendour was now so alarming that I pushed back from

the fence and was about to walk away when she said “I have seen you before on the riding path.”

I turned back and leaned back up against the fence and answered her “yes!” I had a frog in my throat and I coughed to clear it. “we have ... perhaps I should be going?”

“Why ...” she asked.

How the hell was I suppose to answer that? So I stayed silent.

“Don’t feel as if you have to run off ...” there was an edge to the way she said this.

“Perhaps I should go and leave the two of you to your grooming!” I lowered my head and looked down at the ground as I said this.

“What! And miss the *finale*!” On the word ‘*finale*’ the horse snorted as if on cue. I looked up at the stallion and sensed in his eyes desperation for his circumstances. I wondered whether he was truly enjoying his predicament, or whether she was merely taking certain feminine liberties.

She looked up at me from beneath his belly. “If I didn’t do this he would be a bit wild. There is a mare in heat in the stable and well, he doesn’t like to be locked up all by himself with her about. My horse has been kicking the stable walls and I am worried he will hurt himself.”

“Oh ... I see.” I stared down at him. So she wasn’t merely teasing him.

“The mare is a competition horse and its owner does not want to foal her ... not just yet.” The stallion perhaps sensed her mistress was talking about his mare, for the best of him was showing itself to be unbreakable.

“I see,” I said this before I realized the double entendre. She giggled and my face grew warm with my blush. Then there was silence ... as she went back to the slow and steady stroke of the coarse brush.

From the stable beyond I could make out the snort and commotion of another horse. Now the frantic kicks from the stable walls made sense ...

Perhaps I should have continued on my way but instead I stayed put. She had been honest with me. I no longer felt like I was intruding on an intimate moment. Perhaps she knew she was taunting me with “... and miss the finale!” And besides, I was curious what she meant.

She dropped the coarse brush into the bucket with a splash. She was wearing a black rubber glove that went up to her elbow, covered in soapy water. With her other bare hand she stroked the stallion’s belly and with her gloved hand she began to firmly stroke the best of him.

The effect her stroking was having on the stallion was something strangely amazing to watch. I closed my eyes for a moment and just listened. What she

was doing to the stallion was having an effect on me. I had heard these sounds before.

When I was a teenager, while visiting my uncle's farm, I witnessed a grossly overweight bull mount a reluctant heifer. After a frantic and dramatic chase the bull finally forced the heifer into the corner of the fenced yard outside the barn. It was early afternoon and the cow was waiting to be milked. How the bull got into the pen I did not know, but the eldest of my uncle's three sons was known to have a wicked streak to him and well ... I was a city boy he felt perhaps needed to be shocked, or at least taught the facts of life.

And shocked I was that afternoon as the brute chased the cow around and through the throng of other cows in his single purpose pursuit of her, and finally into a corner and into submission. The bull was reminiscent of one of Picasso's Minotaur ravaging a helpless vestal.

The cow's head poked through the fence. The fence creaked and groaned under the combined weight of the heifer pushing back at him and the beast having his way with her. The other cows were huddled on the far side of the ring with their hinds turned to the two, as if afraid to bear witness.

From across the yard I could see that the heifer was struggling, foaming at the mouth and fighting for her breath and bemoaning at the same time. With each thrust of the bull into her, the milk from her udder was being spilled onto the soil beneath her. The bull was on top and inside her at the same time. His brutality was over in perhaps a minute. Then the huge, exhausted bull pulled

himself out of the cow and staggered away satisfied, dragging the best of him along the ground beneath him.

The heifer stood there for a few minutes and then did not bother to go into the barn but instead staggered back through the gate in the fence and clear across the field before she toppled to the ground. She did not have to be milked that night, for her udder had been emptied by the forceful thrusts of the bull. It had squirted in all directions beneath the cow as the bull had its way with her. She was still there at night fall when I happen by the field on my way in the farmhouse. The following morning I watched her wondering about and waited for the cow to enter the barn to be milked. She was the last to come in and was very late that morning.

I could not bring myself to go into the barn that morning, and decided instead to keep an eye out for the bull. He spent the entire day lounging in the shade of a large tree in his own field. At the time I thought that it seemed odd that such a brutal intercourse would lead to the birth of a new life. It seemed odd that such a brutal intercourse was a necessity for the continuation of life. As a teenage and virginal boy it just seemed odd ... in so many ways.

The stallion snorted, which brought me back to the here and now. I opened my eyes. As I watched the stallion I wondered if he had his way with the mare, whether he would be like the Minotaur with the vestal at my uncle's farm? Instead here the stallion was tied to a stake being taunted by both his mistress and the mare. The stallion's haunches were tense. His breathing deep with expectation. His steps herky-jerky. His eyes bulging from his head.

He began to snort and bay at the same time. ‘*Stop ... please stop ...*’ it seemed to plead.

From the barn I could hear more kicks and commotion. “Why don’t you let him go into the barn?” I asked her, but she wasn’t listening to me.

Yet his mistress continued her taunt. Slowly and deliberately ...

He struggled at the rope, frantic to get loose and race into the stable. He tried to kick his mistress aside but she was too quick and nimble for him. She stepped out of the way of his lunging hind legs.

Then she appeared: the mare from inside the stable. She had broken free from her pen and was frantic.

I yelled “Watch out,” just in time for the stallion’s mistress to turn and stagger out of the way of the lunging mare. The mare chased the woman out of the paddock. She had just enough time to roll under the fence before the mare was atop her, digging into the ground with her front leg.

Then the mare turned to face the stallion. He looked up at the mare and was now perfectly still. The mare took her time to amble over to the stallion. He tugged at the rope with all his strength, snorting and braying frantically, but could not free himself. The mare sauntered over to him but stayed a few

meters apart from the stallion. She walked slowly around him as she sized him up. The stallion was going crazy.

His mistress had by now walked over and was standing beside me, breathing heavily. “Thanks.” she said as she brushed some wood chips off of herself. “This will be interesting to watch.” We both turned to the two horses.

The stallion snorted at the mare and turned his flank to her. Hesitantly the mare took a small step towards the stallion. Even from where we were a good six or seven meters away we could see that the stallion was shivering.

The stallion shook its head back and forth in frustration, snorting as he did this. Still the mare remained standoffish. The stallion dug at the ground with her front legs while it tugged frantically at the rope.

“Do you think I should go and untie him?” she asked me. I just shrugged my shoulders. She started to climb the fence when the mare charged a few steps in our direction. I grabbed her shoulder and pulled her back. She climbed down. “I guess not!”

“No ... “I said. “It is a pas a deux.”**

The mistress was now standing in front of me and I was looking over her shoulder at the mare and the stallion. It was then that I became conscious as to how aroused I was by watching the stallion and the mare do their dance.

It was then that the mare turned herself around and took a few steps back towards the stallion, presenting her hind's to him, until his nose was nearly into her backside.

The mare knew what she was doing. She took another tiny step back and the instant the stallion's nose touched her flank like the cow and her milk the stallion spent himself across the ground in a fury.

In the midst of his fury the mare galloped away back into the barn as the stallion snorted and frayed his head back and forth in his frustration.

The whole scene was surreal. I could not turn away ... It was then that the mistress brushed back against me and I felt that urgent burning sensation of my arousal. She did not move away as if her step back was a falter. Nor did I move back away from her, even though perhaps I should have. Instinct told me that she now knew for certain how aroused I was.

The stallion's mistress was giggling. "Now that was quite a finale!" She said this as she looked over her shoulder at me. She too had her signs of arousal, a bit more hidden than mine but evident nonetheless on the front of her blouse. I said nothing but merely turned and was about to leave.

"Don't go ..." she pleaded to me. "Come help me put him back into his stall." I stopped and looked back at her. Her face was a bright red and her eyes had a unique sparkle to them. After a few seconds of hesitation, I said nothing but

walked back beside her and nodded. I was warm on the inside and was intrigued by her impetuosity.

Together we both ducked through the middle of the fence and slowly approached the stallion. He did not fuss. His eyes were exhausted and we both sense that he was all played out. Meekly he let her untie him from the stake and start to lead him into the barn. “Can you pick up the stuff?” she asked without looking back and I picked up her gloves, the brush and the bucket and walked a few safe paces behind them both. He had now sheathed himself.

I followed then at a distance into the barn. I had never been in the barn before. The exterior of the large red building belied the immense volume of the edifice. There was an immense central space and a half dozen little stalls around its perimeter. The gate of one stall was open, while the others all housed horses. There were two girls, dressed in equestrian gear, tending to their horses.

They looked up at me as I entered the barn. “He’s with me,” the mistress said and I walked timidly along once again feeling like an interloper. In the back of my mind I suspected the stable was the private domain of rich girls and their prize horses. Like the stallion I was perhaps the odd man out here.

A strange feeling passed over me as I walked by the two girls. The mare was back in her stall and I wondered which of the two had let her loose to torment the stallion. I knew with certainty that the two girls had likely stopped what

they were doing to peek through a knot hole in the barn's wall to enjoy the *pas a deux*. Was it not just human nature? Out of the corner of their eyes I could tell they were watching the stallion as he walked by with his mistress and that they were also watching me as I walked by as well.

When we got to his stall the stallion waited for his mistress to remove the bridal and give him a carrot from the pocket. Then he meekly walked in and did not bother to turn around as she closed the half door of the stall. There was an air of fatigue in him.

She turned to me and took the things I was carrying and then asked “do you have to rush off?” She boldly continued “I have a lunch I can share ... we can have a picnic.”

“I might stay for a few minutes.” I had an odd sense to the moment.

She lifted her knap sack and said “follow me.” I walked besides her thinking we would be walking out of the barn again to have our ‘picnic’ outdoors but instead she started up a rickety old wooden stairs that led to the loft of the barn. At the base of the stairs I stopped and looked up at her as she walked up the half-dark stairs. I studied the twisting and turning of her pelvis as she stepped up the stairs. I turned my head to see the two girls watching me, both with smiles on their faces. They had stopped what they were doing and were studying me intently.

If I turned away at this point would I be diminished in their eyes? I thought. “Are you coming up” I heard a voice at the top of the stairs query. It was as if I had lost control of my limbs, that I started up the stairs. Without looking back I knew there were knowing big smiles on the faces of the two girls.

I walked slowly up the stairs and pondered what awaited me. The wooden stairs creaked under foot announcing my ascension.

When I got to the top of the stairs what greeted me was a sight unlike any other I had ever seen. There was a roof top opening that was letting in direct sunlight into the loft and under the beam of sun was the woman, now completely bare like a Marilyn Monroe in a calendar poster pose. She had laid out a bright red blanket atop which she was languishing. At her feet was a small pile of her clothes.

I stood at the top of the stairs uncertain as to what to do. She smiled at me and said “come ...” and reached out with her hand.

I walked over and sat on the hay next to her. “You are very beautiful”, I said. “This would make a million dollar picture.”

She reached over and brushed her hand across my leg. “Take off your things and lay with me.”

“I can’t ... I hardly know you!”

She leaned up on an arm and said. “What better way to get to know me!”

“This is a bit too much for me ... a bit too fast.”

She looked at me, but her eyes did not sparkle like they did when I entered the loft. Instead there was a softness to her eyes. “You are a gentleman ...”

“I try to be ... and you are a very beautiful woman. Can I ask you something?”

She leaned back onto her blanket. “Sure ... anything.”

“I like art ... will you let me draw you?”

The sparkle returned to her eyes. “Yes ... that would be nice.”

Out of my satchel I drew out my sketch pad and pencils and starting a large figurative sketch of her. We talked a bit of banter as I drew her. She had a voluptuous figure and was anything but modest. After about a half hour I had finished the sketch. I put the sketch pad and pencils away.

“I have to go now.” I stood up and walked over to the top of the stairs. I could not bring myself to look back for if I did I would have surely ended up in her arms.

From behind me she said “I will see you again sometime?” loud enough to be heard downstairs. I answered back equally loud “I might come and draw you

again next Sunday.” I knew that the two girls downstairs would have heard me say ‘draw.’

As I walked down the stairs, it was a few steps down from the top before I realized that I too was staggering ... herky-jerky, just like the stallion, and that his mistress had done to me, what the mare had done to the stallion.

Pictorial: Something Pink and Beautiful



Canadian Poems

Two Poems by Archibald Lampman

The Truth

Friend ... though thy soul should burn thee, yet be still
Thoughts were not meant for strife, nor tongues for swords.
He that sees clear is gentlest of his words.
And that's not truth that hath the heart to kill.
The whole world's thought shall not one truth fulfil.
Dull in our age, and passionate in youth.
No mind of man hath found the perfect truth.
Nor shalt thou find it; therefore, friend, be still.
Watch and be still, nor hearken to the fool,
The babbler of consistency and rule:
Wisest is he, who, never quite secure.
Changes his thoughts for better day by day:
To-morrow some new light will shine, be sure,
And thou shalt see thy thought another way.

Winter Evening

Tonight the very horses springing by
Toss gold from whitened nostrils. In a dream
The streets that narrow to the westward gleam
Like rows of golden palaces; and high
From all the crowded chimneys tower and die

A thousand aureoles. Down in the west
The brimming plains beneath the sunset rest.
One burning sea of gold. Soon, soon shall fly
The glorious vision, and the hours shall feel
A mightier master; soon from height to height,
With silence and the sharp unpitying stars.
Stern creeping frosts, and winds that touch like steel.
Out of the depth beyond the eastern bars,
Glittering and still shall come the awful night.

Dawn by Fredrick George Scott

The immortal spirit hath no bars
To circumscribe its dwelling place;
My soul hath pastured with the stars
Upon the meadow-lands of space.

My mind and ear at times have caught.
From realms beyond our mortal reach,
The utterance of Eternal Thought
Of which all nature is the speech.

And high above the seas and lands,
On peaks just tipped with morning light,
My dauntless spirit mutely stands

With eagle wings outspread for flight.

Pictorial: An Odalisque from 1925 ...



Art

Some Inspiring Art



A torso of a woman





















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